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ABSTRACT

This teacher resource packet provides information, techniques, and a series of lesson units designed to introduce students to ancient Nubia through works of art found in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. The packet consists of three curriculum units based upon aspects of ancient Nubian life or culture. These units are: "Discovering the Past"; "Kings and Queens"; and "The Shape of Nubian Art." The units were developed to prepare students for and build on corresponding gallery visits to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, but the materials may be adapted for independent use. Each unit is subdivided into three lesson units focus on selected objects in the museum collection and outline projects may be done before, during, and after the museum visit. Eighteen black and white reproductions of the discussed art works are provided, along with background information explaining each art object. A series of questions encourage student description, interpretation, and creative response to the works of art. Reproducible "Discovery Sheets" provide a range of interdisciplinary activities that students can complete either on their own or in small groups. These activities require students to gather information, develop observation and comparison skills, and encourage reflection upon connections between the art and culture of ancient Nubia and contemporary experiences. Suggestions for further reading conclude the resource. (MM)

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EXPLORING
Ancient Nubia

AT THE Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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A Classroom/Museum Resource
on Ancient Africa for Teachers

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Acknowledgments

These materials were developed and written by MFA staff members Margaret Burchenal (Department of Education) and Joyce Haynes (Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art) and curriculum consultants Ruthann Kelley and Dorothy Pilla, in collaboration with a team of teachers who participated in the 1993 Nubia summer institute cosponsored by Northeastern University and the Museum of Fine Arts. Special thanks to Peter Lacovara and other members of the Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art for their support and assistance throughout this project. Kathleen Peckham oversaw the piloting of materials during the 1994–95 school year.

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by Joyce L. Haynes

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Introduction

About This Project

This material is the product of a collaboration between the Museum of Fine Arts and six Boston-area teachers who participated in a 1993 NEH summer teacher institute cosponsored by Northeastern University and the Museum of Fine Arts.

At the MFA, students can gain a deeper understanding of what life was like in different times and places and, through the personal exploration and interpretation of original works of art, connect the world of the past with the world of today. The internationally known holdings of the MFA include the greatest collection of ancient Nubian art outside of Africa. These objects were made, used, and treasured by the people of ancient Nubia. As primary sources about the past, works of art carry important information—information that you and your students can discover for yourselves through careful observation.

How To Use These Materials

Exploring Ancient Nubia at the MFA is designed to help you make the history of ancient Nubia come alive for your students by learning about and through works of art. Intended to be used in close conjunction with another MFA publication, *Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston, 1992), this packet contains a series of lesson plans that connect Museum visits with your classroom curriculum on ancient Africa.

This teacher resource packet consists of three chapters—**Discovering the Past, Kings and Queens,** and **The Shape of Nubian Art**—each of which focuses on a different aspect of ancient Nubian art and culture. These themes have been selected to familiarize students with basic aspects of Nubian art and culture through works of art in the MFA.

Discovering the Past — How do archaeologists learn about the everyday life of ancient Nubians by looking at the objects they used?

Kings and Queens — How were the kings and queens of ancient Nubia portrayed in art? What do the objects found in royal tombs tell us about ancient Nubia?

The Shape of Nubian Art — What are the important characteristics of Nubian art? What materials and technologies were used by ancient Nubian artists?

Each chapter includes three units, and each unit focuses on selected objects in the MFA collection and outlines projects to be done before, during, and after a Museum visit. You may follow the sequence suggested here or create your own using projects from different units. Projects include questions designed to generate discussion through which students can share information and ideas and connect the works of ancient Nubians to the world of today. The discussion questions suggested throughout this packet offer an approach to helping students look thoughtfully at works of art by asking them to:

- describe what they see in careful detail
- analyze what they see (What choices did the artist make in creating the object? How does the object compare with similar objects?)
- interpret what they see (What overall effect is created? What does the object tell us about the people it belonged to and the time and place from which it came?)
- develop personal connections and responses to works of art.

We hope that you will adapt these interdisciplinary projects to the particular needs and interests of your students and that you will use the information and approaches suggested here to develop projects of your own.

Planning Your Museum Visit

MFA-Guided and Teacher-Guided Visits

In planning your visit, you may choose either to have an MFA Gallery Instructor guide your group, to guide your students yourself, or to combine the two. If you decide to do both, it is a good idea to take a lunch break in between.

After you have scheduled your visit with the Youth Group Visits Coordinator (617/369-3310), visit the Museum yourself to become familiar with the route your group will take from the School Group Entrance (on the same level as the cafeteria) to the galleries you plan to visit and back. Consider how much time you want students to spend in each gallery and how much time it takes to get from one part of the Museum to another.

NOTE: The works of art discussed here are usually on view, but occasionally they may be moved or taken off exhibition (for conservation, for a special exhibition, or for some other reason). **Before** you bring your students, **please** visit the galleries to check the location of objects with which you want to work.

To facilitate small group activities, divide your class into groups of no more than ten, each with a chaperone. Prepare your chaperones so they understand what their role is and how they can help you achieve your goals for the visit.

Museum Etiquette

Tell students that they'll need to use all their senses at the Museum *except* their sense of touch. Please remind them not to touch works of art or the display cases. The oils on our hands damage works of art—even those made out of stone or metal. And don't forget that food, drink, and chewing gum are not allowed in Museum galleries.

Structuring a Teacher-Guided Visit

Structure your teacher-guided visit so that students spend some time together as a group and some time working on their own on a project using the Discovery Sheets provided here (or those you design yourself).

Make sure you plan enough time for your visit—usually between one and two hours is the right amount. Begin by orienting your students to the galleries in which they will be working, introducing the theme(s) they will explore, and demonstrating strategies for looking at works of art.

Set a time and a place for your students and chaperones to regroup. Ask students to share some of their discoveries. What was most surprising to them? What questions do they want to pursue further?

Reading Labels

Remind students that they can often learn about an object that interests them by reading the label. Labels usually provide basic information about the subject matter, date, material, etc. and also give the object's accession number. The accession number tells you when that object was acquired by the MFA. For example, an object whose accession number is 23.730 was the 730th object to be acquired by the MFA in 1923.

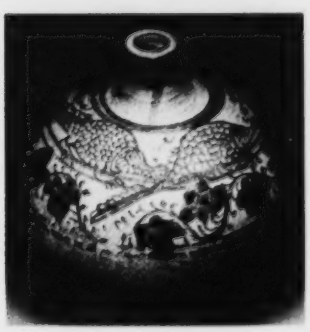
Ancient Nubia BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

This essay provides background information on the three themes of this resource packet: Discovering the Past, Kings and Queens, and The Shape of Nubian Art. (A general overview of the history and culture of ancient Nubia can be found in another MFA publication, *Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* [Boston, 1992].) It is difficult to make sweeping statements that cover all phases of Nubian culture because, unlike in ancient Egypt, the history of ancient Nubia is not a continuum of a single, unified culture separated only by different rulers. Instead, ancient Nubia was composed of kingdoms that flourished at different times and places, each with its own culture. Actually, the entire country was unified under one ruler very few times in ancient Nubian history—the Napatan period was one of them. The periods that offer us the most information about the cultural achievements of ancient Nubians are the Kerma (2000–1500 B.C.), Napatan (750–270 B.C.), and the Meroitic (270 B.C.–A.D. 350) periods.

It is important to keep in mind that the study of ancient Nubia is growing. Scholars are researching, excavating, and learning about ancient Nubia all the time. A great deal remains to be learned, and every year our understanding of ancient Nubia expands.

Discovering the Past



One of the most difficult aspects to reconstruct about an ancient people is their daily life. This is especially true of ancient Nubians, as they have left us almost no artwork showing themselves at home or engaged in the many tasks that they must have performed every day; nor have they left us any written accounts explaining their life-style. All that we have from which to interpret and reconstruct their daily life are the objects that they made and left behind. The objects that they placed in their burials have been the best preserved, so archaeologists interpret the life-style of ancient Nubians primarily by studying their grave goods. How successful would that be for our culture?

Domestic animals

By piecing together clues that the Nubians have left us, we can learn a great deal about their world. We know, for instance, that animals played a major role in their lives. As in most ancient

cultures, cattle, sheep, and goats provided not just food, but clothing and other necessary objects. Nubians made skins into leather for clothing such as skirts, kilts, head coverings, sandals, and wrist guards; they also made horse bridles and other implements from leather. They used goat hair to upholster furniture and sheep's wool to make blankets.

The importance of animals as a source of food and clothing in daily life carried over into the religious life of ancient Nubians. We know that animals were used in religious ceremonies because of the tiny sculptures of cattle and sheep found placed in graves. In the Kerma period, hundreds of cattle skulls were arranged around the perimeter of large, round graves. Amun, one of the most powerful gods in Nubia, was shown as a man with the head of ram. Because of the ram's religious importance, it is not surprising to find sacred images of the ram worn as pendants, rings, and earrings.

The frequent appearance of dogs in Nubian art seems to indicate that dogs were as important to families in ancient Nubia as they are today. Besides being the pet and guardian of the family, dogs would accompany men in battle, as well as in hunting. Sometimes, soldiers even had their beloved dogs buried with them. For example, one grave contained a beautiful red-and-green leather dog collar with impressed designs of horses on it. The names these pets were given are similar to dog names used today—such as Blackie (for its color) and Gazelle (for its speed).

Economy

The people of ancient Nubia did not use coins for money. They traded or bartered for the goods and services they needed. People who earned their living by fishing, farming, or raising cattle and sheep could trade their fish, vegetables, and meat for the things that they wanted that were made by other craftsmen, such as pottery, jewelry, baskets, or furniture.

Occupations were varied. The government probably employed some people, since the expertise of engineers, architects, supervisors, and workers was needed to work the gold mines or to dig the huge, round, royal Kerma graves or to quarry stones for making sculptures or to build the great royal pyramids and temples of the Napatan and Meroitic periods.

Because the only dependable way across the great desert of Africa north to Egypt and the Mediterranean world was through Nubia, international trade was a major part of Nubian economy. Nubian merchants would have set up caravan centers or trading outposts near the southern and northern Nubian borders.

At the southern border, trade items were brought from central Africa. There, merchants would barter for items such as lion and cheetah skins, ostrich eggs and feathers, ivory tusks, and ebony logs. In the north, Egyptian soldiers directed the flow of trade into Egypt from forts strategically placed on the Nile. They attempted to monopolize the expensive trade goods from southern Nubia as well as large quantities of gold from Nubian mines. Egyptian products exported to Nubia included some foodstuffs (wine, honey, and oils) and the luxury goods often found in Nubian graves: alabaster vessels and sculpture, scarabs, and jewelry.

Gold

Just as the physical environment of Nubia determined the types of animals and plants found there, so too we must keep in mind that the natural mineral resources that were available to ancient Nubians shaped their way of life. The rich desert gold mines made Nubia a major player in the ancient mineral trading world. Gold nuggets in bags, or in the form of ingots or shape of doughnut-sized rings, were used like money in the international world.

The mineral operations would have required a highly organized labor force, with skilled prospectors to find the gold, mapmakers, supervisors, quarrymen, and accountants and scribes to tally and weigh the gold, as well as treasury officials to prepare the exports. Also, many laborers—such as diggers, crushers, washers, and smelters—would have been required to obtain and refine the gold. Others shaped the gold into ingots. Cargo carriers were also necessary to transport the gold both overland and by boat. In addition, military officials were responsible for the supervision of the gold workers in the mines, and soldiers

accompanied the expedition to protect the valuable cargo from thieves on its journey from the desert mines to its final destination. In this way, these natural resources created a large job market.

Once the raw material was in hand, craftspeople used it to make exquisite jewelry, statues, and other precious objects for wealthy families. Gold and silver were in constant demand, especially by ancient Nubian rulers, who filled their tombs with jewelry and vessels made from precious metals. The quality and quantity of tomb goods reflect the wealth and power of the person with whom they are buried.

Pottery

In Nubia, most people lived along the Nile, and the banks of the river are a natural resource for clay, the common ingredient for making pottery. For ancient Nubians, pottery was a highly prized possession. We know this because pottery vessels are among the most frequently found objects in burials throughout all phases of Nubian culture. Also, their pottery was always made with great artistic style and pride, as can be seen in the lustrous hand-polished finish, delicate forms, or carefully painted plant and animal motifs and abstract designs.

Pottery as imports

Nearly any container you use in your home today would probably have been made of pottery in the ancient world. Similarly, any food or drink that was imported into Nubia was sent in pottery vessels. Egyptian goods were imported to Nubia in undecorated, utilitarian containers very early on, based on evidence from A-Group graves that contained large quantities of Egyptian wheel-made pottery containers. (Archaeologists have named the earliest culture yet known to have inhabited northern Nubia the A-Group since we do not know what this people called themselves. The A-Group culture existed from about 3100 B.C. to sometime before 2800 B.C., ending probably as a result of raids from Egypt by the early pharaohs.)

An Egyptian text from Dynasty Six (2323–2150 B.C.; toward the end of the Old Kingdom in Egypt) mentions the export of ointment, honey, clothing, and oil "for the gratification of the

Nubians," suggesting that cosmetics and oil for anointing the body were highly sought-after products. Wine, transported in large amphoras, was also a common luxury import. Like the Egyptians, the majority of Nubians were beer drinkers; wine was for the elite. Nubians produced little of their own wine since grapes were hard to grow in their hot, dry climate. We know that items produced in both Nubia and Egypt, such as cereals, cheese, and beer, would not have been imported.

Archaeological findings reinforce the accounts of Greek travelers who wrote about the kinds of foods they found in Nubia. They said that Nubians had no oil, just butter and suet, and that they also had no fruits except dates grown in the royal gardens.

Military

Like other countries in the ancient world, Nubia needed its own military force to defend their towns, capital cities, and rulers against invading armies and to expand their power into neighboring territories. Nubia's greatest military success came with the conquest of Egypt under King Piye (about 730–716 B.C.), who then became king of both Egypt and Nubia. Nubian soldiers also fought other large-scale military battles with the Assyrians and Persians, as well as with a variety of warring nomadic groups from the desert areas that flank Nubia. Throughout ancient times (and even up to the Middle Ages), Nubians were renowned as skillful bowmen. They were often hired by Egyptians as well as by other countries of the ancient Near East to fight on their behalf.

In some periods, Nubian soldiers stayed in Egypt and formed their own small communities, where they lived and eventually were buried. Fortunately for us, some were buried with inscribed tomb stones called stelae. On one (see photo #2) in the MFA's collection that was made for a man named Nenu, we find his name and titles as well as a carved-and-painted scene of him and his family which gives us a virtual snapshot of a Nubian soldier with his wife, children, and pet dogs.

Kings and Queens

Most of our information about the rulers of Nubia comes from ancient texts, scenes carved and/or painted on temple walls, and inscribed stelae of the Napatan period or later. These sources tell us that the ruler was all powerful. The ruler was not only the political leader, but also served as the head of the army and the chief priest in the temple rituals.

Stelae are especially useful for recounting major political or social events and royal edicts. Stelae set up by Taharka, the greatest of all known rulers of Egypt (690–664 B.C.), tell us about his military victories, about sporting events he sponsored, and even about how his mother came to visit for his coronation. In the center of the MFA Nubian gallery, a stela (photo #15) of King Tanyidamani (about 120–100 B.C.) shows both the religious and military roles of the ruler. Look for the side where Tanyidamani appears twice, each time standing before the ram-headed god Amun and his wife. On the left, he is shown in the role of a priest making offerings to the god, and on the right, he presents Amun with a conquered enemy. The four bound prisoners below are further evidence of the king's military success.

Choosing a ruler

In America today, our leaders are chosen by a democratic vote; in ancient times, the selection of a ruler was very different. Although we don't know all the specifics, we do know some thing about how the process worked in the Napatan period. Some archaeologists say that the ruler had to be born to a queen; others argue that rulership was passed on by the father. The evidence is strong for both cases.

Women clearly played an important role in who took the throne. In Aspelta's coronation text on a stela set up at Jebel Barkal, he lists the seven generations of women who came before him on his mother's side of the family as a way of proving his royal heritage. Aspelta, who was probably Taharka's great-grandson, was the king of Kush who ruled over much of what is now the northern Sudan in the early sixth century B.C.

We do know that the ruler was chosen from among the other royal children or from one of the king's brothers. In addition, evidence suggests that the ruler could be selected by military

officials or by priests. In one instance, when the army chose not to vote, the king was selected by the god Amun in an oracle.

After the ruler was crowned, he or she would set out on a coronation journey to visit Napata and all the other major temple sites in Nubia. At each stop, the ruler would introduce himself or herself to the temple and the gods who were worshiped there. Then the king or queen would give orders to restore the temples and appoint new priests; by doing this, order would symbolically be created throughout the land. From Greek sources, we know that kings rarely appeared in public and were remote and unapproachable. The average person would have known them only through rare public events.

The mother and the sister of the ruler held a very special and high position in the society. They are frequently mentioned in inscriptions, and many artistic images can be found. The role of the queen as ruler in her own right was most evident in the Meroitic period. We know that queens ruled without a king at that time and had their own pyramids with images of themselves carved in relief in their pyramid chapel conquering the enemy.

Royal iconography

In the Napatan period, inscriptions refer to Nubian rulers in traditional Egyptian terms. Nubian rulers were considered to be the son or daughter of the gods, and so to have the god-given right to absolute power.

Nubian kings and queens were distinguished by special clothing. During the Napatan period, kings wore the short royal kilt and a close-fitting cap with two rearing cobras (uraei) on the forehead and a headband—with its two streamers hanging down the back of the head—tied around the forehead. Napatan and Meroitic rulers frequently wore the gold ram necklace, composed of one large and two smaller ram heads on a gold chain. You can see this royal regalia on the statues of Kings Anlamani, Aspelta (photo #10), and Senkamenisken in the MFA.

Kings and queens also wore elaborate jewelry. Sometimes they wore a whole series of bracelets (similar to the Hathor bracelet [photo #14]), in addition to upper arm bands and numerous

rings (sometimes as many as ten on each hand). Like the queen in the MFA's stone triad (photo #16), they sometimes wore heavy necklaces with large pendants. Examples of pendants on view at the MFA include the Hathor crystal (photo #6) and the ram-headed lion on a column (photo #7).

The Shape of Nubian Art

Nubia was a crossroads, a meeting place for those who wanted to purchase exotic trade goods from Nubia and places in Africa south of Nubia. This well-traveled trade route between central Africa and the Mediterranean coast is the reason cultural influences of Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and peoples from farther south in Africa can be found in Nubia. These influences appear in religious images, burial goods, and royal emblems, as well as in many purely decorative design motifs.

One image borrowed from Egypt is Hathor, the goddess of love, whose emblem, the woman's face with cow's ears, appears frequently on necklaces, bracelets (photo #14), earrings, and pendants. The Egyptian ankh sign, which means "life," is another image commonly found on Nubian jewelry, pottery, and even on the robes of the Meroitic rulers. Lotus flower designs, long associated with rebirth in Egypt, are also found throughout Nubian art.

Nubian rulers of the Napatan and Meroitic periods revived the Egyptian custom of pyramid burials. They sponsored great monuments and works of art based on Egyptian models, seeking to recreate for themselves the style and grandeur of Egypt's glorious past. Not simply copies of the Egyptian type, Nubian pyramids had much steeper sides with underground burial chambers and large offering chapels with beautifully decorated walls. They were also generally smaller, less than one hundred feet tall. Some of the burial goods found in Nubian pyramids, such as shawabtis, were also first used by the Egyptians, starting in the Middle Kingdom (2061–1784 B.C.). Shawabtis are small figures, carved or molded in the shape of a mummified person and inscribed with a text saying that the shawabti would do any work that the gods asked the spirit to do in the afterworld.

Nubian artists also looked beyond Egypt, to other Mediterranean cultures, for artistic ideas. Inspired by ancient Greek vase painting, Meroitic potters adapted classical motifs such as grapevines and laurel wreaths to decorate their vessels.

While Nubian artists borrowed many designs from their neighbors, they often made them distinctly Nubian by changing them in subtle ways. This is especially clear in some of the royal emblems adapted from Egypt. For instance, the Nubian king wears two rearing cobras on his forehead, while the Egyptian king had just one.

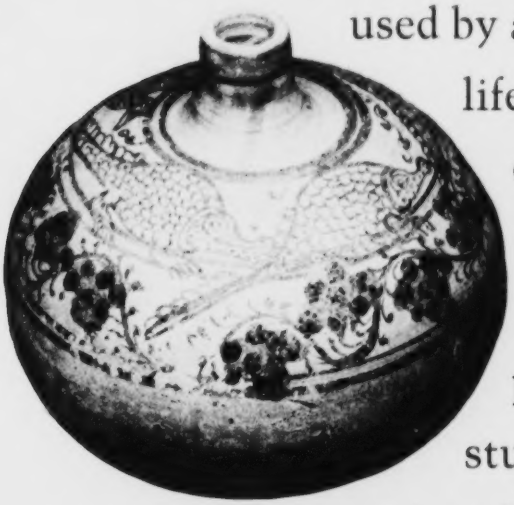
This packet offers teachers a range of information and techniques designed to introduce students to ancient Nubia through works of art in the MFA's collection. We hope this introduction will encourage teachers and students alike to make further explorations in ancient Nubia.

Essay written by Joyce L. Haynes, Department of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian, and Near Eastern Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Discovering the Past

How have archaeologists learned about life in ancient Nubia through objects found in tombs? What can we learn about ancient Nubian life through looking at pottery? What do the clothing and jewelry worn by ancient Nubians tell us about their lives and beliefs?

In this chapter, students will investigate how objects are used by archaeologists to help us learn about life in ancient Nubia. Most of the objects in the MFA's Nubia gallery came from the burial places of Nubian rulers and other powerful people. Like Museum archaeologists, students will learn about the cultures of ancient Nubia through the pottery, jewelry, and other objects found in Nubian tombs.



What Is an Archaeologist?

Archaeologists are scientists who explore the past by excavating and studying the remains of ancient cultures and by carefully recording information about what they find. We have been able to learn a great deal about some ancient cultures because what the people left behind provides clues about how they lived. Archaeologists are responsible for uncovering and interpreting these clues. In Egypt and Nubia, for example, archaeologists have uncovered ancient towns, burial sites, tombs, and temples.

When archaeologists are working at an excavation site, they follow certain procedures to make sure that the findings are carefully documented. First they make a map and take an overall photograph of the site. Next they take detailed photos of the excavation. They measure and draw plans of each step of the "dig" and make notes that describe the day's activities and findings in a diary. They photograph the objects as they are uncovered. Finally, archaeologists record details about the objects they find in a book called a register. After archaeologists finish a dig, the artifacts are sent to museums, where the objects are cleaned, restored (if necessary), and displayed for all to enjoy and learn from.

George Reisner: Pioneer Archaeologist

For almost one hundred years, the Museum of Fine Arts has had teams of archaeologists excavating ancient sites in Egypt and Nubia. George Andrew Reisner was among the most prominent of these archaeologists. He was responsible for finding some of the most important pieces for the Museum's collections of Egyptian and Nubian art.

Reisner devised systems for organizing work and keeping records that became models for the field of archaeology. Without records, archaeology would be no more than treasure hunting. Each object on an ancient site is a clue to the past. Where it was found and what else was found with it are additional clues that can be even more important than the object itself. As Reisner's assistant, Dows Dunham, wrote, "The process of excavating an ancient site...means the destruction of the site, the destruction of the evidence in one sense and it can only be justified if a complete and permanent record of every step in the process is made at the time. Reisner used to say the records of a well-constructed excavation should enable future scholars to reconstruct in every detail the conditions found by the excavator."

UNIT A: Archaeology

How have archaeologists learned about life in ancient Nubia through objects found in tombs?

How do archaeologists use objects to draw conclusions about a culture in general, and about Nubian culture in particular? Through exploration of objects from tombs, students will become familiar with the kinds of objects that accompanied ancient Nubian burials and understand the importance of these objects in Nubian culture.

Pre-visit Activities

Reading *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts), pp. 40–43.

Projects

1. Discuss "the past"—what do we mean by it and how do we find out about it? How would we find out about what happened last year? Fifty years ago? Five hundred years ago? Discuss how sources change as we go back in time.

2. Divide students into groups and give each group an object from a twentieth-century kitchen or some similar type of utilitarian object (select things that will probably be unfamiliar to your students). Tell students that, as archaeologists, their job is to figure out how their object was originally used. Can they determine how the object was made (by hand or machine, using what kind[s] of technology)? Who might have owned an object like this?

Discussion What can we learn about Nubian life and society by looking at objects? Look carefully at the Nenu stela (photo #2) and have students list and describe all the information they can see, including clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, furniture, animals, weapons. After gathering this data, ask the students to discuss what the data tell us about ancient Nubia. What can be said about ancient Nubia now that they have studied this object?

Museum Activity

Take your group to the Nubian gallery and have students imagine they are museum archaeologists who have uncovered these objects from ancient burials. Now the task of interpreting the findings begins. Divide the students into groups and give each group one of the following topics.

- occupations
- transportation
- beliefs
- personal adornment (clothing, jewelry, hairstyles)
- interchange with other cultures
- animals (domestic and wild)
- plant life

What can be learned about each topic based on the objects in the gallery? Find at least three objects that relate to each topic; list and sketch them. Have each group report in front of the object that, in their opinion, offers the most information about their topic.

Post-visit Activities

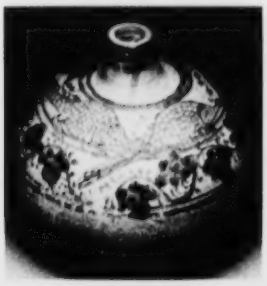
Discussion Back in the classroom, discuss what has been learned about ancient Nubia. How does the work of archaeologists help us learn and understand more about the past? What's missing? Why? What more would you want to know? In addition to the MFA, where else might you go to find more information?

Projects

1. A Nubian tomb is like an ancient time capsule. If you wanted people in the future to know about your life in late-twentieth-century America, what clues would you leave for them? Create your own time capsule for future archaeologists to find. Use a cardboard box and decorate and fill it with models (made out of Plasticine or other available materials) of things from your daily life.

2. Have each student create a storyboard or a flip book that shows a day in the afterlife of an ancient Nubian based on the objects they saw at the Museum.

UNIT B: Pottery



What can we learn about ancient Nubian life through looking at pottery?

What does pottery tell us about the way Nubians lived? What materials and processes were involved in making Nubian pottery? Do images used in decorating pottery also have symbolic meaning? Students will be introduced to ancient Nubians through their pottery, the most common material that survives to tell us what life was like in the ancient world. Looking at the function and form of Nubian pottery, students will develop an appreciation for pottery as both an ancient and contemporary art form.

Pre-visit Activities

Reading *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts), pp. 49–51.

Projects

1. Have each student bring a container of some kind from home in order to make an exhibition of twentieth-century vessels. Look at all the containers and discuss their materials, shapes, sizes, colors, decorations, and uses. Then decide what category (or categories) you will use to organize this classroom exhibition.

2. Begin to teach hand-building techniques and make hand-built pottery vessels.

Discussion Look at slides of Nubian pottery and discuss its similarities to and differences from twentieth-century vessels. Do the categories you designated for twentieth-century vessels still apply? What new categories would you need to create?

Museum Activity

Have students use the following **Discovery Sheet** to help them further explore and study Nubian pottery. As students present their objects and questions to the group, discuss whether the objects relate to something similar used today.

DISCOVERY SHEET

Describe and draw in detail two pottery objects that vary in some way. For each object, include material used, shape, surface decoration, and possible function. Make notes about the differences between them, what each might have been used for, and one or two questions you have about each.

Object 1: .....

Description: .....

.....

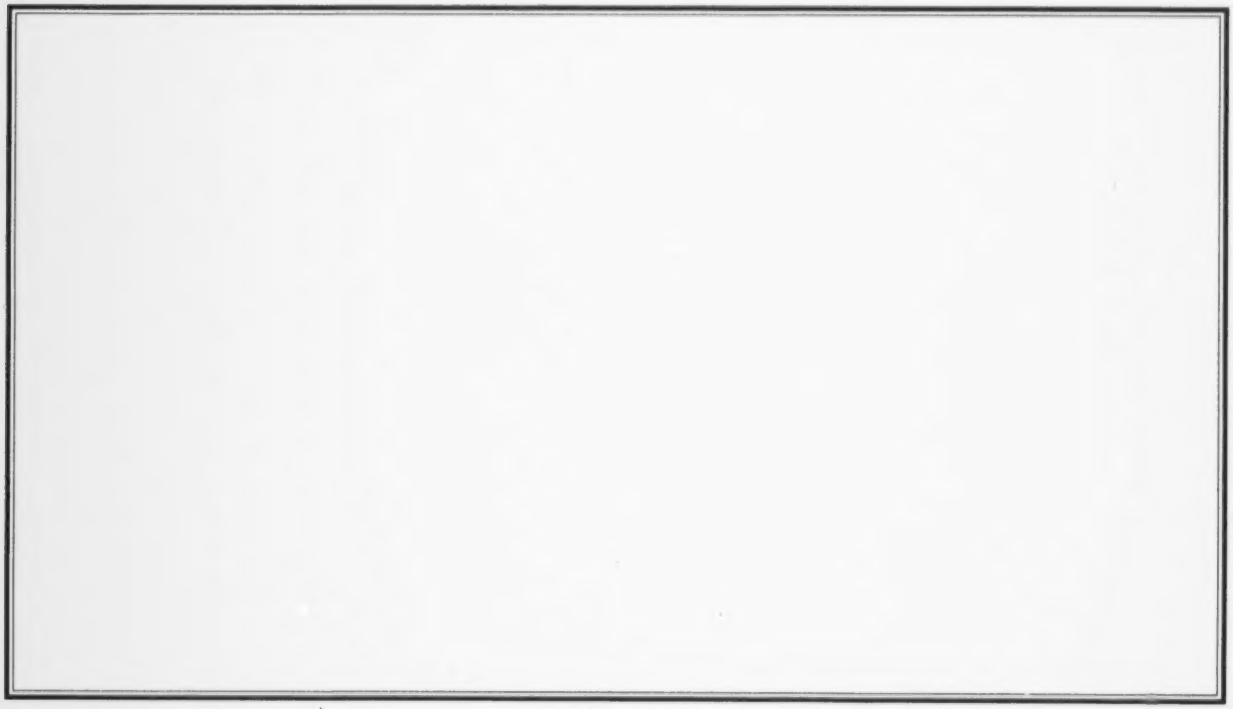
.....

Questions: .....

.....

.....

DISCOVERY SHEET



Object 2: .....

Description: .....

.....

.....

Questions: .....

.....

.....

Post-visit Activities

1. Have students create one piece of hand-built pottery (or, if using clay is not an option, students can create a vessel through a drawing, painting, or collage decorated with Nubian motifs). Each student should be able to describe the use of the piece of pottery made and discuss the decorative motifs used.

2. Brainstorm about the needs and activities we have today that would have been unknown to ancient Nubians. Then, using the clay (or other available materials), have students create and decorate a piece of pottery designed for contemporary use, write a paragraph describing it, and present their object to the class. Discuss how the shape and decoration of each vessel reflect its function.

UNIT C: Clothing and Jewelry

What do the clothing and jewelry worn by ancient Nubians tell us about their lives and beliefs? How do climate and geography affect what people wear?

Through observation of characteristic Nubian jewelry, students will learn about the distinctive Nubian use of precious and other metals and the symbolic importance of certain animals in Nubian life.

Pre-visit Activities

Reading Look at the drawing in *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992) on pages 16–17 and discuss how clothing and hairstyles were used to identify people from different countries in the ancient world.

Projects

1. Locate Nubia on a map of Africa. Discuss how climate and geography would have affected the way of life of people living there—especially their clothing. Use the picture of the Nenu stela (photo #2) to test your hypotheses.

2. Have students bring in pictures (family snapshots, magazine illustrations, etc.) in which clothing (and other items of personal adornment) provides a clue to the time, place, season, environment, occasion, relationships between people, etc. of the photograph.

Discussion Have students look carefully at a picture of the Hathor bracelet (photo #14). Ask them to describe and discuss the object and speculate about its use—from what they can see, how would it have been worn?

Then look at a picture of the Hathor crystal (photo #6). Again, have students look carefully and describe and discuss the object and speculate about its use (this is much harder to figure out!). The only thing that you should tell them is that, like the bracelet, it was an object of personal adornment and that they will learn more about it when they visit the Museum.

Museum Activities

1. Starting at the Nenu stela, review Nubian clothing and jewelry styles. Then ask students to find the Hathor crystal, and move there. See if students can learn more about this object in the Museum than they could from the picture. Discuss what kind of figure—human or goddess—the gold image represents. Tell students that Nubian jewelry was not only decorative, but often also served to magically protect the wearer from harm (think of the kinds of amulets and charms people wear today to bring good luck or to ward off evil).

2. Have students use the following **Discovery Sheet** to sketch and gather information about two objects of their own choosing. Have students share their findings afterward and save their drawings for use in post-visit activities.

DISCOVERY SHEET

Ancient Nubians wore a variety of **amulets**—small objects or jewelry thought to magically protect the owner or to bring good luck. Find two examples of amulets or jewelry that use animal imagery and sketch them here.

Describe the article in detail: _____

_____

What material(s) was used to make this object? _____

_____

Who would have worn this article and how? A child or an adult? A woman or a man?

_____

_____

Why and when might the person wear this article? _____

_____

_____

Why do you think this animal was used on this object? _____

_____

DISCOVERY SHEET

Describe the article in detail: _____

_____

What material(s) was used to make this object? _____

_____

Who would have worn this article and how? A child or an adult? A woman or a man?

_____

_____

Why and when might the person wear this article? _____

_____

_____

Why do you think this animal was used on this object? _____

_____

(over→)

Post-visit Activities

Discussion Reflecting on the drawings created during the MFA visit, have students discuss the materials, craftsmanship, and function of Nubian articles of adornment and speculate on their relationship to Nubian climate and cultural traditions. Think about the origins of symbols for gods and goddesses and speculate on the connections between Egypt and Nubia. Think about borrowings that occur among cultures today (movies, music, food, etc.).

Project Create your own amulet for protection and good luck using the following materials:

gold or silver foil (3" square)

sticky-backed mounting board (such as Prestax)

2' cord (gimp, gold or silk cord, etc.)

multicolored beads (plastic or wood) with at least a 1/8" hole

Inside a 3" square on a piece of paper, draw an outline of a symbol you saw at the Museum or create your own personal symbol. (If you use lettering, remember to write in reverse!)

Place your drawing over a piece of foil and trace it, pressing down hard so that your sketch is imprinted on the foil. It helps to do this on a surface with some give, like a pad of paper or a wad of newspaper.

Peel off backing of mounting board and attach the foil. Bend the excess foil around the edges or cut it off.

Punch a hole (or two) at the top of your amulet. Fold the piece of string in half, insert the looped end through the hole, and pull the loose ends through the loop. For a final touch, add some beads on both sides before tying it around your neck.

KINGS AND QUEENS

Who were the Napatan kings? What were some of their major achievements? What affect did they have on Nubian art? What objects were selected for inclusion in royal tombs? What can we learn about ancient Nubia through objects found in royal tombs? How and why do the images found on Nubian royal objects project images of power and strength?

In this chapter, students will develop an understanding of the roles of kings and queens in ancient Nubia—focusing on the Napatan rulers—and investigate the symbolic forms used to represent their power.

UNIT A: Napatan Rulers

Who were the Napatan kings? What were some of their major achievements? What affect did they have on Nubian art?

Looking at statues and other objects, students will learn about the Twenty-fifth Dynasty and their descendants, the Napatan kings, and understand the importance of this period in the history of ancient Nubia.

Pre-visit Activities

Reading After reading pages 22–23 and 27–32 in *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), discuss what archaeologists and historians have discovered so far about government in ancient Nubia.

Projects Have students create a collage (individually or as a group) illustrating how the power of political and religious leaders from around the world is expressed in the media today.

Nubian Family Tree

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Museum Activities

Discussion Look carefully at images of the boat stand (photo #8) and the colossal statue of Aspelta (photo #10). Discuss what these images show about the achievement(s) of Nubian rulers and how various aspects of power are conveyed.

Using the following **Discovery Sheet**, have students look for objects in the galleries associated with ancient Nubian rulers to discover how rulers demonstrated their power through works of art. Start the exploration in front of the colossal statue of King Aspelta. After telling the story of how he was chosen by the god Amun to be king of Nubia, discuss how this statue shows Aspelta's power (consider scale, headgear, pose, use of gold leaf—now lost—on roughened areas, etc.). Divide students into groups and have each group study TWO of the objects listed below using the **Discovery Sheet**.

FLOOR 1
Aspelta's pyramid model

Statue of a queen between two godesses

Stela of Tanyidamani

Stela of Tedeken

FLOOR 2
Statue of Aspelta

Atlanersa's boat stand

When groups have completed their work, you may want to visit the Egyptian Old Kingdom gallery and use the statues of King Mycerinus as a point of comparison to discuss similarities and differences.

DISCOVERY SHEET

How did Nubian rulers convey their power to their subjects and to people from other lands? Look carefully at two objects that demonstrate royal power and sketch them here.

Name of object: .....

Material it's made of: .....

.....

Name of object: .....

Material it's made of: .....

.....

Describe their powerful qualities. Think about size, association with other powerful beings, materials, etc.

.....

.....

How are these two objects similar? Different? .....

.....

.....

Post-visit Activities

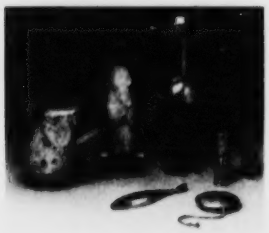
1. Using information from readings and the Discovery Sheets, have each group give a brief class presentation on what they learned about how the power of Nubian rulers was conveyed through art. In their presentation, students should place special emphasis on what they learned from the objects they studied at the Museum and what questions came up that are still unanswered.

2. Have students individually design a sculpture or stela that portrays the life of a contemporary leader or pop hero. What objects would you use to symbolize their special qualities or accomplishments?

3. As a class, create a tomb for a Nubian ruler or for a modern political figure. This could be done simply as individual drawings or could involve a major transformation of part of the classroom.

Discussion What Nubian rulers can be identified through the artifacts in the MFA? What is so important about the Twenty-fifth Dynasty for their descendants who ruled from Napata and Meroe? What do images of kings and queens in sculpture and on stelae tell us about the role of royalty in ancient Nubian society?

UNIT B: Royal Tombs



What objects have been found in royal tombs, and what can they tell us about ancient Nubia?

Students will explore the objects found in Nubian royal tombs and consider why these particular objects were placed there. What do these objects reveal about the Egyptian and Nubian belief in an afterlife?

Pre-visit Activities

Reading Assign and discuss readings about the burial practices of Nubian kings and queens in *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), pp. 25–33 and 40–43.

Discussion Looking at pictures of key objects, discuss them with students in terms of their form and function. Create a vocabulary list with students that includes words that may be used to define the "form" and "function" of objects found in Nubian royal tombs. Such words might relate to shape, material, size, color, decoration, utilitarian and ceremonial uses, etc.

After looking at each object in Aspelta's tomb assemblage individually, consider them as a group. What does the fact they were found together tell us? What do these objects have in common?

Museum Activity

Have students work in teams of four to record three to five objects in the Nubian gallery using the "Archaeologist's Register" **Discovery Sheet** that follows. Have each group produce a drawing, a detailed written physical description, and discussion of the object's use and the reason for its having been placed in the royal tomb.

Lead a short, final group discussion to compare objects recorded. Consider why these objects were suitable for a royal tomb, including the use of precious materials, level of craftsmanship, and the nature of the symbolic decoration.

DISCOVERY SHEET

Archaeologist's Register

No.	DESCRIPTION	MATERIAL	MEAS	DATE	PROVENANCE	REMARKS

Post-Visit Activities

Projects

1. Have students combine their reading about burial practices and what they learned at the MFA into a class report to be given at the end of the unit.

2. Discuss the objects found in Nubian royal tombs recorded by students during the Museum Activity. Raise questions about why these items were placed in the tomb. Consider what kinds of objects were NOT found in the tombs that they might have expected to find there (discuss why certain materials might not survive or what early tomb robbers would have taken; see *Nubia*, pp. 29–30). What objects found in the tombs DID surprise them?

Then, as a group activity, have students develop a wall display that shows:

- The objects with which Nubian rulers were buried, including a written description of how those objects might have been used in daily life.
- The important everyday objects students would want to take with them to the afterlife (students should prepare detailed drawings and descriptions of these objects, as they did of their objects at the Museum).

3. Have students write a description of how they would prepare tombs for themselves and have them include drawings (or other kinds of illustrations, such as collages) and/or descriptions of the three most important objects they would want in their tombs.

UNIT C: Images of Power

How and why do the images found on Nubian royal objects project images of power and strength?

How did ancient Nubian artists suggest the power of their rulers? What kind of power—political, religious, social—is depicted? This unit explores the way royal power was portrayed in ancient Nubia and encourages students to apply their observations to the world today.

Pre-visit Activities

Reading *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), pp. 26, 31–32.

Discussion As an introduction to identifying images of power, have students brainstorm to create a list of symbols that they feel represent strength and power in today's society. Suggest as many different kinds of power (political, religious, social, etc.) as possible. Then ask students to bring in images from the media showing contemporary political leaders. What "props" do today's politicians use to create powerful images? Define with students the words **symbol** and **propaganda** and identify concrete illustrations of each.

Look at the statue of Aspelta (photo #10) and the boat stand of Atlanersa (photo #8). How do these objects convey ideas about power?

Then have students compare and contrast contemporary and ancient symbols.

Museum Activity

Have students look for and record (in sketches and notes) images of strength and power they find on objects displayed. Images they might find include: lifesize (and larger!) statues of kings and queens, prisoners submitting to the ruler, objects made out of precious metals, etc.

Regroup students to compare their findings. Discuss the artistic devices used to create images of power, including choice of image, simplification of the image from realistic to stylized, size, and the inclusion of symbolic objects (headdresses, jewelry, etc.).

Post-visit Activity

Back in the classroom, continue the discussion of how images convey information by considering the visual symbols used today in advertising. Take a common advertising image—the "golden arches" of McDonald's, for example—and discuss how it conveys meaning. The class can then create murals that tell a story using symbols of power identified by the students.

Divide students into teams of four, with the students in each group assuming one of the following roles:

a **writer** to provide the "story" for the mural

an **artist** to design and supervise the making of the mural

an **educator** to write a paragraph explaining the mural

a **public relations person** to advertise the mural and to invite others to come and see it.

At the completion of the mural project, each team could put on a "tableau" performance of their mural. Students might role-play a frozen image of each mural and awaken to explain their role in the scene. All students are able to participate in this activity by having the others address questions to the "awakened" characters.

THE SHAPE OF NUBIAN ART

What are the characteristics of Nubian art as seen in pottery? How are animal forms used—as symbols and/or as decoration—in Nubian art? Where did Nubian artists find inspiration—from the natural world, from neighboring societies, from the imagination? How do the size and scale of Nubian royal sculpture suggest the power of ancient Nubian kings and queens?

In this chapter, students will come to understand the basic characteristics of Nubian art. They will look at the materials and technologies used by Nubian artists, their designs and motifs, and consider both the functional and the symbolic meanings of these objects.

UNIT A: Designing Pottery

What are the characteristics of Nubian art as seen in pottery?

Since different Nubian cultures created pottery in different shapes and styles, how can we identify those cultures through careful looking at pottery? What can pottery tell us about the technology, craftsmanship, and creative processes of ancient Nubians?

Pre-visit Activities

Reading *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), pp. 49–52.

Discussion Looking at the picture of A-Group pottery (photo #1), have students describe carefully (and sketch, time permitting) the shape and decoration of the pots. Have the class determine a list of characteristics of A-Group pottery that would help others identify it. Do the same using the picture of a Meroitic pot (photo #17). Then, without identifying it, show a slide of Kerma pottery (photo #4). Ask the students whether they think the people who produced this newly discovered pottery had more in common with the A-Group or with the Meroitic potters. Why?

Project Have students begin to create a timeline on the classroom wall showing pottery produced by cultures around the world at the same time as one (or more) of the Nubian cultures. Illustrate the timeline with postcards, student work, sketches from the MFA visit, etc.

Museum Activity

Starting with the A-Group pottery, have students look at the painted ceramic bowls and choose one to sketch. First have them sketch the outline of one of the bowls, then put on the decoration. Have each student talk about how the decoration fits the shape of the bowl (for example, in the bowl decorated with triangles, the triangles get smaller toward the bottom).

Discuss what makes these painted bowls look alike (the shape?). What makes them look different (the decoration)? Why do you think Nubians made these pots rounded at the bottom, instead of flat? (Hint: The floors of Nubian houses were made of soft sand, not hard, flat surfaces.)

Divide your group in half, and have one group study the C-Group section of the case (especially the incised, black pots) and one group look at the Kerma pottery. Have each group discuss the similarities and differences between the A-Group pottery and their new pottery group, then regroup and present their findings. What can they speculate about the similarities and differences between these cultures based on the pottery?

Move to the Meroitic pottery, whose decoration may have been inspired by Mediterranean traditions. Discuss how these pots are different from all the other pots in the gallery. (Hint: Note different shapes and a new kind of decoration inspired by nature, not just geometric shapes. This decoration focuses attention on one part of the vessel, instead of the all-over design.)

Look for the pot with frogs painted on it. What shapes are the frogs' tongues? (Hint: They are in the shape of an ankh, the Egyptian hieroglyph for "life.") Look for a creature that still lives in the Nile today. (Hint: Crocodiles are on several vases.) Look for a vase that may have been used for storing wine. (Hint: It has a vine pattern around the neck.)

Now that students are familiar with looking at the shape and decoration of ancient Nubian pottery, have students look on their own, using the following **Discovery Sheet**.

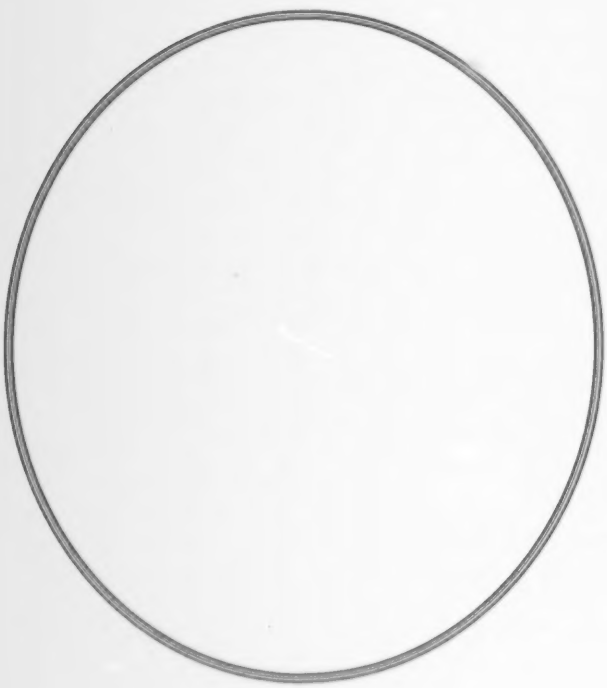
DISCOVERY SHEET

1. Choose a favorite pot and sketch it here:

Why did you choose this pot? How do you imagine ancient Nubians used it?

DISCOVERY SHEET

2. Find two vessels made out of materials other than clay and sketch them here:



Do you think these vessels served the same purposes as pottery vessels? Why or why not?

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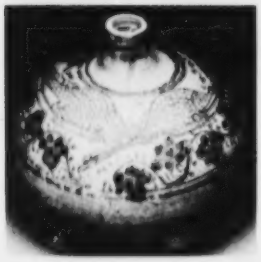
UNIT B: Animal Motifs



How are animal forms used—as symbols and/or as decoration—in Nubian art?

Through exploration of images of animals used to decorate Nubian art, students will explore the use of animal motifs to create patterns.

Pre-visit Activities

Discussion Ask students to think about the geography of ancient Nubia and to consider what plants, animals, and other natural forms ancient Nubians would have seen regularly. Explore with students a selection of Nubian objects decorated with designs drawn from the natural world. How is the realistic representation of animals (drawn, painted, or photographed) different from the animal images seen in Nubian art?

Compare the designs with photographs of creatures native to the Nile Valley (birds, cobras, crocodiles, flies, rams, etc.). Have students discuss how the Nubian designs are different from the real objects. How are three-dimensional animals transformed by Nubian artists into two-dimensional shapes? How do two-dimensional shapes used as decorative elements work together to create patterns?

Project Have students bring in vessels from home that are decorated with images of some kind (not just words) and discuss the similarities and differences. Have students sketch the designs of their vessels and describe them. Discuss where each design comes from. Does it come from the natural world? From the artist's imagination? From somewhere else? If the decorative image is an animal, does the animal chosen have any symbolic meaning, or is it purely decorative? Why do you think the artist chose this particular animal for this particular object?

Next, look at animal images used in Nubian art and discuss them, using the questions above. Compare Nubian animal images with the images on the contemporary vessels.

Museum Activity

Have students look for animals in Nubian art using the following **Discovery Sheet** (pages 9 and 10).

After students have completed their hunt, discuss the kinds of creatures they found. What kind(s) of creatures appear frequently in Nubian art? Why? Which creatures still exist in Nubia today? Do the creatures have symbolic meaning when used on a particular object? How are animals used as symbols today (on flags, official seals, sports uniforms, cars, etc.)? What animal would you choose as your own personal symbol?

Post-visit Activities

Discussion Using the information gathered during the Museum visit, lead students in a discussion comparing the objects seen in the Nubian gallery with contemporary objects with which students are familiar. Begin a discussion with students regarding the materials used to create ancient objects and compare and contrast them with today's materials and decorations.

Projects

1. To reinforce the concepts of shape and pattern, have students bring in a picture of an animal (or any kind of creature) to use as their personal symbol. Have students draw their animals as realistically as they can on a piece of paper. Then, on a second piece of paper, have students draw the outline shape of that same animal. Finally, using a third piece of paper, have students make a paper cutout shape of an animal without first drawing it.

Then have students cut out multiples of their shape and glue them onto a larger piece of paper to create a pattern.

2. Have students research the symbolism of one of the creatures found in Nubian art. They might also try to find out if that creature had the same meaning in other ancient cultures that it did in Nubia.

DISCOVERY SHEET

With what kinds of creatures did ancient Nubians share their world? Find and list the creatures in the categories below.

Animals .....

.....

.....

Birds .....

.....

.....

Insects .....

.....

.....

Amphibians .....

.....

.....

Reptiles .....

.....

.....

DISCOVERY SHEET

Sketch your favorite creature here:

Name of object: .....

.....

Material used to make this object: .....

.....

.....

.....

Why do you think the ancient Nubian artist chose this creature to decorate this object?

.....

.....

.....

UNIT C: Royal Sculpture

How do the size and scale of Nubian royal sculpture suggest the power of ancient Nubian kings and queens?

Students will see how Nubian kings and queens were portrayed in sculpture and will learn how scale and proportion help make a powerful sculptural statement. How are powerful figures portrayed today?

Pre-visit Activities

Projects

1. Introduce scale drawing to students, showing them how to create objects in proportion to one another using measurements and graph paper. Following this, look at Taharka's shawabtis and discuss the purpose of shawabtis placed in Nubian royal tombs. Have them draw, on graph paper, one shawabti at three different scales.

2. Have students write a paragraph explaining both the scale-drawing process and the meaning of the subject (the shawabtis) that they used in the scale-drawing assignment.

Museum Activity

Introduce students to the colossal Nubian king statues Aspelta and Anlamani, to the smaller statue of King Senkamenisken, and to the group of Taharka's shawabtis. Have students draw on graph paper one colossal king statue, the smaller king statue, and three shawabtis. Work with groups of students on paying careful attention to proportion (the relative size of head to torso, torso to legs, etc.) as they draw.

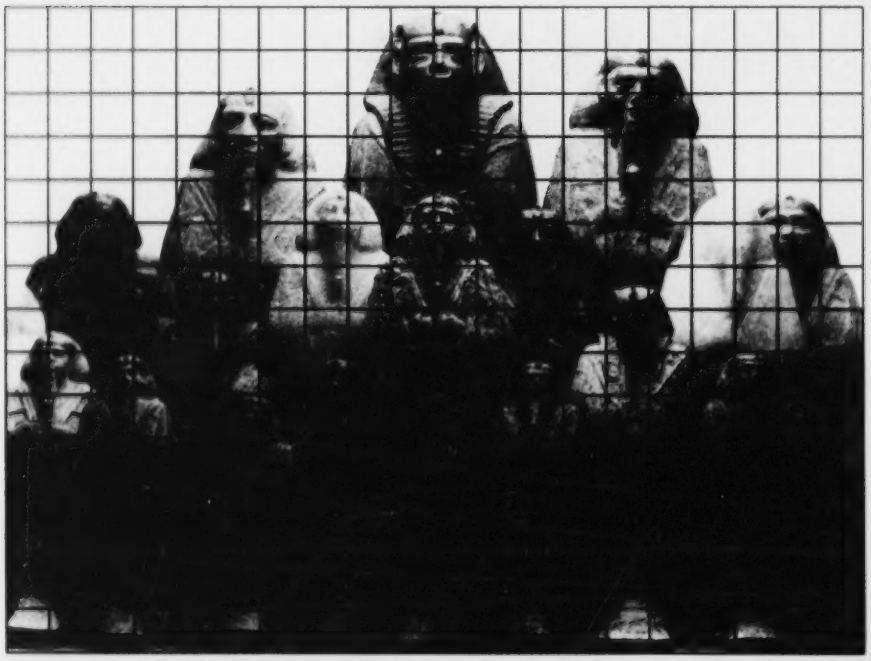
After students have made their drawings, regroup to compare the proportions of the figures. Although the actual size varies greatly, are the proportions the same? Can you come up with a general statement about the ideal proportions of the male figure in Nubian sculpture?

Next, have students do scale drawings of the Nubian queen flanked by two goddesses. Discuss what this sculpture suggests about different standards for the female figure in ancient Nubia and Egypt. Look in the galleries for other representations of the female figure in Nubian and Egyptian art that support your views.

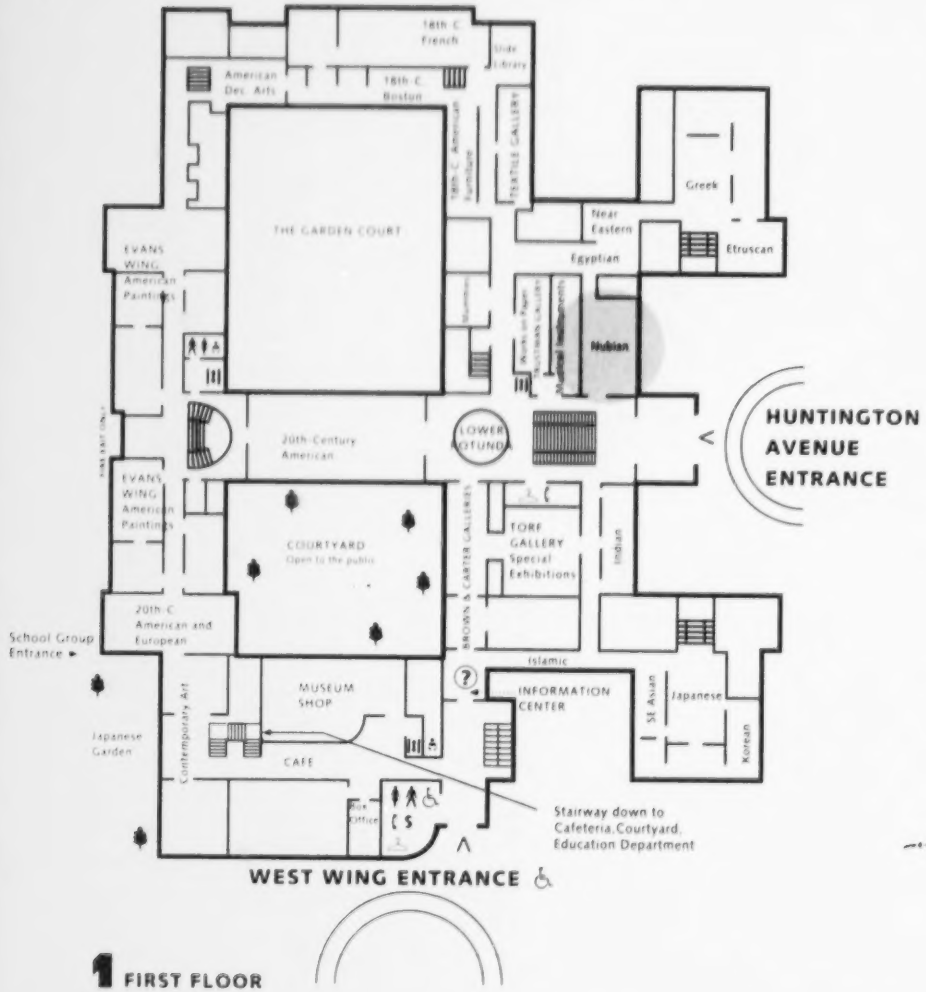
Post-visit Activities

1. Have students do graph-paper sketches of each other. Are the proportions the same as the ones you discovered in Nubian art?

2. Explain to students that cultures develop different ideas about the ideal mathematical proportion for the human figure (as reflected in the size of the head relative to the overall figure) and define it in so many "heads high." Use examples from Egyptian Old Kingdom sculpture, Greek sculptor Phidias (7.5 heads high), and Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo (8 heads high).



Maps to the Galleries



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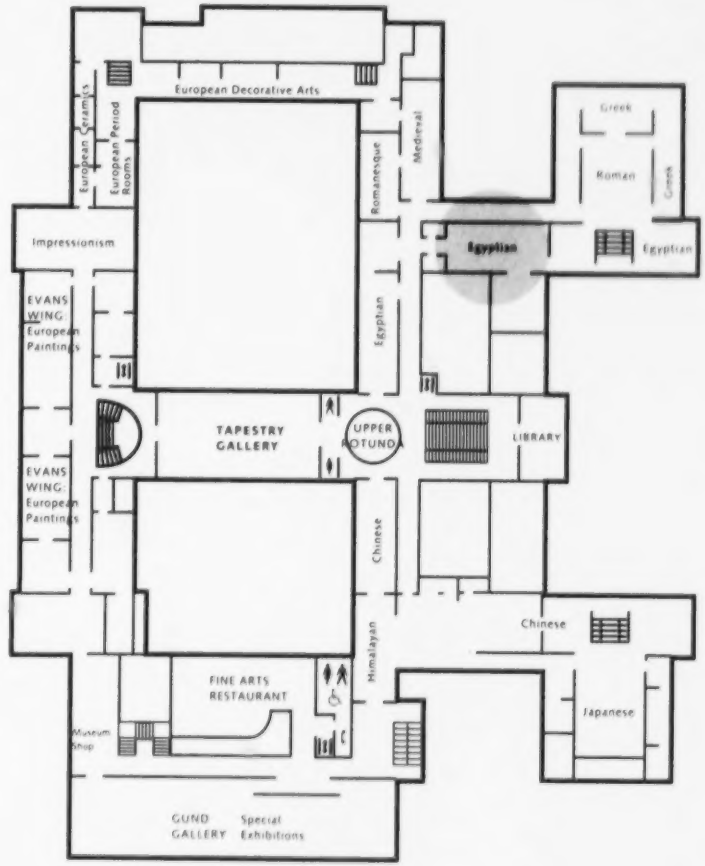

2 SECOND FLOOR

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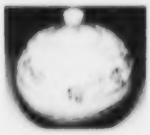
Nubian Art SELECTIONS FROM THE MFA'S COLLECTION

First Floor

1. A-Group pottery
2. Nenu stela
3. C-Group pottery
4. Kerma vessels
5. Ivory inlays
6. Hathor crystal
7. Lion pendant
9. Goddess amulet
11. Pyramid model
12. Ritual objects
13. Queen Mernua
14. Bracelet
15. Stela of King Tanyidamani
16. Queen and two goddesses
17. Pottery jar
18. Bridle ornaments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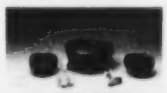
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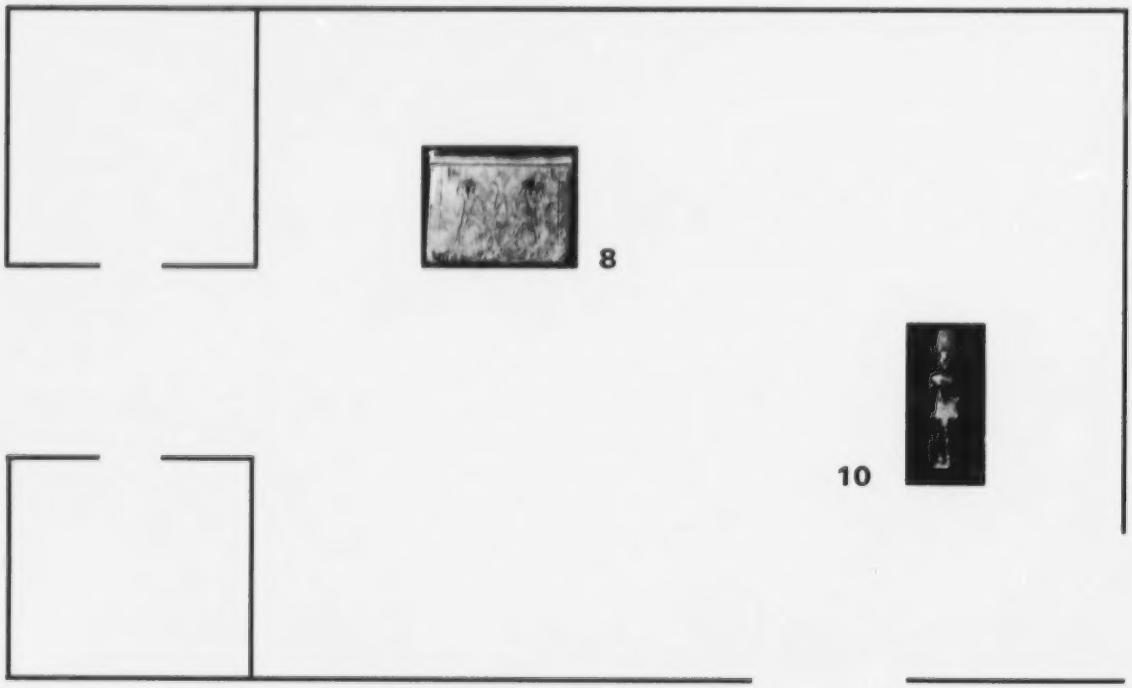
Nubian Art SELECTIONS FROM THE MFA'S COLLECTION

Second Floor

8. Boat stand of Amun

10. King Aspelta



NOTE: The works of art listed on these pages are usually on view, but occasionally they may be moved or taken off exhibition (for conservation, for a special exhibition, or for some other reason). **Before** you bring your students, **please** visit the galleries to check the location of objects.

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1 A-Group pottery

3700–2800 B.C.

a and c: Gift of George A. Reisner 19.1540, 19.1543; b: Sears Fund 03.1613

The A-Group culture produced many types of pottery, the most distinctive of which is called "eggshell" ware. This kind of pottery is called eggshell because the walls of the pots are so thin (from three to five millimeters). The pottery is light brown and painted with red or orange oxide in geometric patterns inside and out that were made to imitate woven baskets. The patterns may have been drawn with a finger or with a thin, brushlike implement. The typical pot is cone-shaped for stable placement in the sand. These thin-walled pots represent one of the earliest high points in ceramic art in Nubia. Only the potters from Kerma and Meroe reached this high standard in later times, and nothing like this eggshell ware was produced in Egypt. Elegant, carefully decorated vessels such as these were found in the graves of only the wealthy.

The A-Group culture continued to produce impressed patterns in pottery that were probably made by bones, sticks, or the potters' fingernails. Also, people of this culture created distinctive vessels made in "black-topped" ware. These red, polished pots with shiny black interiors and rims were made in a variety of shapes. Some examples here have a fine burnish, or polishing streaks, on the surface. The shapes tend to be simple, round-bottomed forms. Pottery of a similar style is still made in Africa today.

Pottery was used for dishes, storage containers, cooking pots, and offering vases. A-Group pottery was made from clay from the Nile, and it was made by hand, not on a potter's wheel.

In a dry climate like that of Nubia and Egypt, ceramics do not easily disintegrate. This means that unless a pot was smashed to pieces, it still exists in the ground today. Pottery containers for food and drink were placed in A-Group burials, presumably to hold nourishment for the spirit. This leads us to believe that the A-Group people believed in a life after death. This pottery is important to us not only because of its beautiful forms, but also because it can tell us about the daily life and even the beliefs of ancient Nubians.

Archaeologists are still learning about the technology used by the A-Group people, primarily because the information needed to know more would come from settlements, and no settlements of the A-Group have yet been excavated.

In addition to pottery, small stone palettes are also commonly found in early Nubian graves. Made of granite, quartz, or imported slate, palettes can be round, rhomboid, or oval in shape. In Egypt, they were used for grinding the pigments used to make eye paint. Since palettes were very popular in Nubia, it may mean that the A-group used eye paint as well.

2 Limestone grave stela of the soldier Nenu
From Gebelein, southern Egypt

2250–2035 B.C.

Emily Esther Sears Fund 03.1848

Nubian men were renowned as bowmen and warriors. From the earliest historical period in Egypt (about 3000 B.C.), Egyptians called northern Nubia "Ta-Sety," meaning "Land of the Bow." Egyptian kings often hired Nubian archers to be soldiers in Egyptian armies and gave them land in Egypt for their families. They lived and were buried near the Egyptian community that they served. A number of Nubian mercenaries settled in Gebelein, a town in Upper Egypt. Many of these soldiers married Egyptians and were buried in Egyptian manner, although they proudly retained their identity as Nubians on stelae (inscribed stones) commissioned for their tombs.

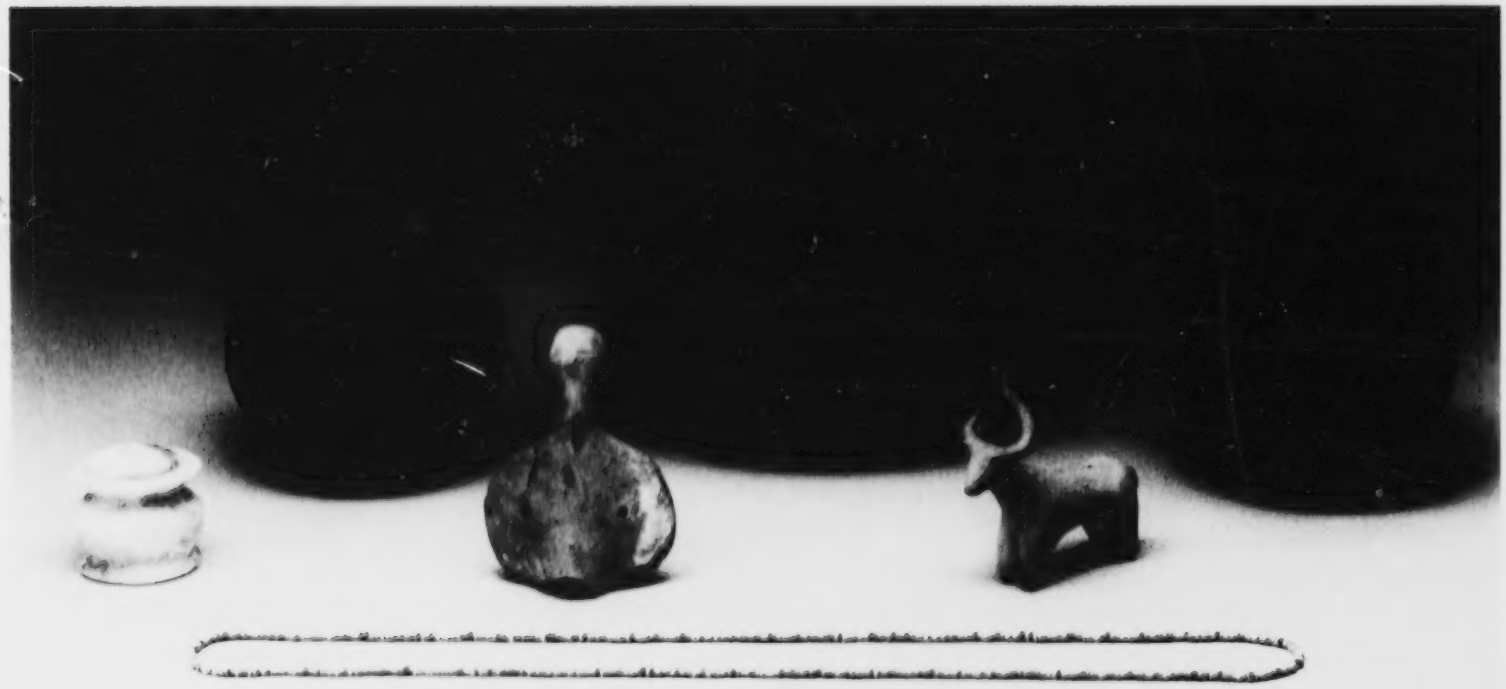
This limestone stela depicts one such Nubian soldier, Nenu, with his Egyptian wife, "his beloved, Sekhat-Hor." He holds a bow upright before him and a quiver of arrows. He has a short, curly Nubian hairstyle (indicated by an edging of painted dots) and a short beard. He wears a short kilt tied around his waist; the distinctively Nubian narrow leather beaded sash hangs down in front. Nenu's son wears the same kilt and sash and a long, black hairpin in his hair. The artist further distinguished Nenu and his son from the Egyptian servant in the upper right corner by painting them a darker red-brown skin color.

Nenu's wife Sekhat-Hor wears the close-fitting, straight, linen dress and broad collar typical of Egyptian women. The woman, Inetef-Waw, to the right of the son is probably Nenu's daughter. She wears a skirt with the upper torso uncovered, a popular Nubian style.

The server, called "the butler Genew," presents a bowl of beer and, above, are the words, "for your Ka." A large jug of beer stands on a table behind him. Two pet dogs sit next to each other at the far right. Dogs are almost always shown on stelae from Gebelein belonging to Nubians.

The top and side of the stela is inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs with a prayer to the god Anubis, the god in charge of embalming. It asks Anubis to watch over the spirit of Nenu by providing him with all the food and drink that he will need in the next world. The stela marked the burial site, to which friends and relatives would come to remember the deceased by leaving offerings of food, drink, or prayers.

Translation of Text Across the top: "An offering which the king gives to Anubis, who is upon his mountain, Imywet, Lord of the sacred land." Right side: "In all his good and pure places. An invocation offering for the venerated one Nenu." Over the wife on the far left: "His beloved, Sekhat-Hor." Above Nenu: "The Southerner, Nenu." Above the son at his feet: "His son, Heseb-kai." Above the servant, top right: "For your Ka, the butler Genew." Over the daughter: "Inetef-Waw."



3 Assemblage of C-Group objects From Lower Nubia

2000–1500 B.C.

Human figurine, animal figurine, cups, large black-topped bowl, kohl pot and lid, bead necklace

Ceramic, alabaster, carnelian, and faience

Gift of G. A. Reisner and G. Steindorff no #, 40/114/P,101/151/1, 101/80/6, 101/424/6, 69/61/3, 58/119/2, no #

The C-Group people lived in Lower Nubia from about 2000 to 1500 B.C., co-existing peacefully with the Egyptians. Nubians farmed small areas along the Nile, raised cattle, and traded with Egyptians.

Sculpture of the C-Group shows more types of images and more finely rendered figures than in the forms of the A-Group. On display is a broken top half of a female statuette made of clay. Figures of females have occasionally been found in settlements but are more frequently found as part of the burial equipment in graves. Male figures are quite rare. The features are modeled with very little detail. Only horizontal slits mark the eyes, and the nose and mouth are pinched together like a beak. Some figures have impressed dots and lines on them representing tattooing, which was also found on some of the C-Group bodies. These figures no doubt were made to fill a special purpose, but that purpose is still debated. Some have suggested that these images were fertility goddesses or mother goddesses, that they were magical figures, or even toys. Figures of animals, especially sheep and cattle, have also been found in the tombs.

Strings of beads made of faience and carnelian were popular jewelry. The C-Group people used a preparation called kohl to line their eyes, and the small alabaster pot shown here contained the pigment for eye liner. (The applicator used to put it around the eyes is not shown.)

The C-Group people are known for their incised black pottery. An endless variety of incised patterns in geometric designs were created on black-ware cups and bowls. A white or sometimes colored pigment was rubbed into these patterns to make them stand out. This technique for decorating pottery is still popular in some places in Africa today.

Pottery styles and designs change in subtle ways over time and with geography. Therefore, types of pots used in one period will be different from those used at another time. For this reason, pottery is one of the most important tools that archaeologists use to date and distinguish different cultures.

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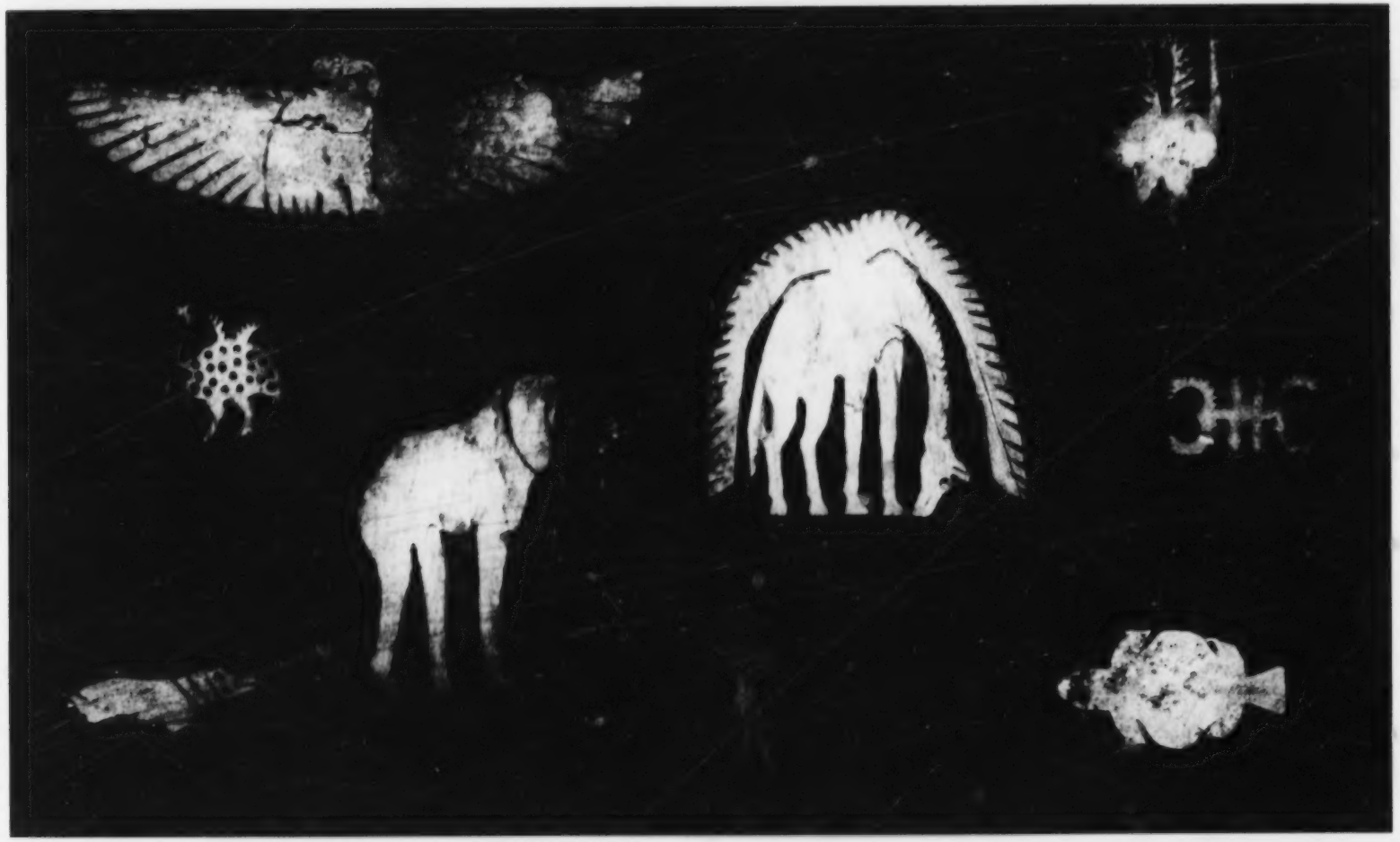
4 **Assemblage of pottery vessels**
From Kerma
1700–1550 B.C.
Spouted beaker, rilled beaker, miniature beaker, beaker, beaker with incised decoration, bowl, pot with ram's head, polished bottle
Museum Expedition 13.4076, 13-12-936, 13.4105, 16-4-1523, 20.1714, 14-2-714

Some of the most delicate and creative pottery vessels were made by the potters of the Kerma culture. The most famous type of Kerma ceramic is the black-topped pottery, commonly found as a cup or beaker. Unsurpassed by pottery made by any other Nubian culture, these vessels are highly polished and very thin, even though shaped by hand. The Kerma culture brought to perfection a special firing technique that produced rich combinations of red and black on the same vessel.

Kerma potters also made fine black-ware ceramics that are uniformly black and polished to a high gloss surface. The unusual shape of one tall black-ware vessel with rippled sides may have been made to represent a stack of individual cups; such stacks were often found in Kerma tombs.



5 Ivory inlays
From Kerma

1700–1550 B.C.

Vulture, ostrich chick, winged giraffe, symmetrical animal form, elephant, crocodile, vegetable motif, turtle

20.1505, 20.1334, 13.4211, 20.1547a, 13.4202, 13.4212, 15-2-128, 20.1532, 15-2-42

The decoration of furniture with ivory inlays was very popular in the Kerma period. One innovation of that period was the inlaid funerary bed. The foot ends were decorated with inlays cut from thin pieces of elephant or hippopotamus ivory and set into depressions carved into the wood.

At first, this innovative style of decoration consisted of simple geometric patterns. Later, animal figures were included. Some were modeled after the animals found locally, such as the elephant, giraffe, ostrich, and bustard bird. But Nubians also created fantastic creatures, like a giraffe with wings. A number of common Egyptian motifs were also adopted, such as the vulture, the bee, and the hippopotamus goddess Taweret.

Clearly, any decoration for an object that would be placed in the tomb had special significance. We do not have exact knowledge of the meaning of some of these ivory figures, but no doubt each had symbolic meaning and was meant to protect or help the deceased in some specific way.

It is interesting to note that Egyptians were influenced by these inlay designs and styles found in Nubia, for soon after, inlaid furniture became very popular in Egypt (during the New Kingdom, 1500–1100 B.C.).

6 **Pendant**
Gold Hathor head on a crystal ball
From el Kurru (tomb of a Twenty-fifth Dynasty queen)
About 720–700 B.C.
Museum Expedition 21.321

This unique amulet is made of a translucent rock crystal ball surmounted by the head of the goddess Hathor cast in gold. She wears a sun disk crown enclosed in cow's horns. On her forehead is a uraeus (cobra). The loop at the back of the crown shows how this amulet could have been threaded onto a cord or chain and worn around the neck.

Amulets were worn by the living as protection and buried with the dead to promote spiritual rebirth in the next world. Amulets were believed to have special powers. Sometimes the power resided in the image itself (wearing an image of Hathor meant that the goddess would protect you). Ancient Nubians believed that the materials used to make the amulet—in this case, crystal and gold—also had magical qualities.

The crystal base was actually made to hold an amulet. The gold tube that fits in the hole drilled through the center of the crystal ball was made to hold some material of special amuletic power. Other known amulet containers have held small garnet beads, pieces of papyri, or thin sheets of gold with magical texts written on them. Unfortunately, the X-rays taken of this piece showed no sheet of gold, and no non-metal materials can be detected. Historically, these amulet cases have been closely associated with female burials, which suggests that they had a special protective value to women.

Scholars still debate where this unique object was made. The combination of a rock crystal ball topped by the head of a goddess is unparalleled in Egyptian art. Some Egyptologists feel that, although the gold Hathor head looks like it was made by an Egyptian craftsman, the combination of the head with the crystal ball was most probably a Nubian design.

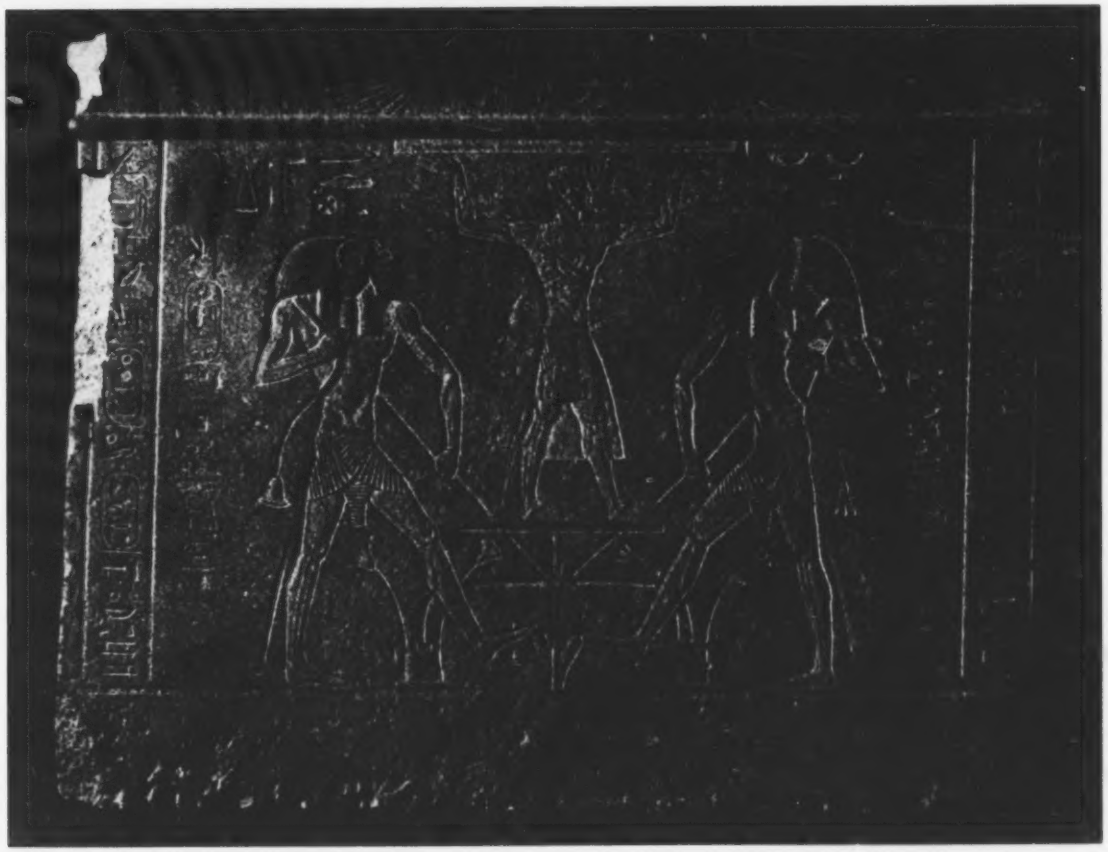
Other scholars who have examined ancient amulet cases believe that the Hathor crystal was, in fact, made in Egypt. Royal workshops in the Egyptian delta city Tanis made gold and semiprecious stone jewelry about 1000 B.C. that has much in common in style and technology with this piece. Until more conclusive evidence is uncovered, scholars will continue to debate the question of the origin of the Hathor crystal.

7 **Pendant**
Electrum ram-headed lion on a column with glass inlays
From el Kurru (tomb of a Twenty-fifth Dynasty queen)
About 720–700 B.C.
Museum Expedition 24.972

In a few of the queen's burials that tomb robbers overlooked, George Reisner found some treasures that give an idea of the wealth and taste of the Napatan upper classes. One piece is this pendant. The ram-headed lion (or sphinx) sits on a column that is inlaid with colored glass set in tiny metal enclosures. This enameling technique is called cloisonné, and it reached a state of high perfection later in Meroitic times.

The ram is wearing a long wig typical of most Nubian and Egyptian gods and goddesses. A large, multistrand necklace is incised on its neck, and tiny, incised lines indicate the coat of the animal.

The piece has a loop affixed to the back of the lion's head, so that it could be worn as a pendant. It may have been made for funerary purposes or worn in daily life as well. Its fine craftsmanship places it among the best goldsmiths' products of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty.



8 Black granite stand for a boat shrine of Amun-Re From Jebel Barkal

653–643 B.C.

Museum Expedition 23.728

Atlanersa, a descendant of Taharka's, ruled from about 653–643 B.C. This solid granite stand was found in its original position and in almost perfect condition in the Great Temple of Amun at Jebel Barkal (located in what is now the Sudan). Nubians, like the Egyptians, at certain periods believed that the sun god Amun traveled across the heavens in a sacred boat. The statue of Amun was kept in a shrine that sat in a model boat in the inner sanctuary of a temple. The boat was used to carry the shrine of the god when it left the temple, for religious festivals, processions, or other special events. This stand served as a pedestal, or resting place, for the boat.

The images on the boat stand show Atlanersa as the legitimate ruler of both Egypt and Kush. On the front, the king is standing above the symbol of unification, papyrus and lotus plants knotted together by the gods Hous and Thoth. The king's arms are raised up toward the heavens in a pose of holding up the sky. On the opposite side of the altar, Atlanersa is flanked by two goddesses, who wear lotus and papyrus plants, representing Upper and Lower Egypt, on their heads. These royal symbols originally reflected the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, a period of short duration historically but one that was incorporated into Nubian royal symbolism for centuries.

The unification theme is continued on the two shorter sides of the stand as well. The Nile gods entwine the two plants, while above, the kneeling king is accompanied by the jackal-headed souls of Nekhen and the hawk-headed spirits of Buto, who represent the royal ancestors of Egyptian pharaohs.

9 **Faience amulet**
Winged female with a crowned uraeus on each shoulder
From el Kurru (tomb of Neferu-ka-Kashta, a wife of King Piye)
Late eighth century B.C.
Museum Expedition 24.639

Although winged goddesses are known in Egypt, none of them takes the form of this uniquely Nubian goddess. From head to foot, she is distinctive. The unique features include the crown of sun disk and horns topped by two tall feathers back to back, the crown typical of the chief Nubian queen, and the short hairdo, also not customary on queens or goddesses in Egypt. The two cobras on the upper arms of the goddess, the three circular objects in relief on the forehead, and the pose of the arms with the elbows forming a right angle are unique. The shape of the body—with the large breasts, heavy hips and thighs, and deeply indented navel—is also typical of Nubian sculpture.

Wearing this amulet was meant to protect the wearer from evil (a hole for suspending it on a cord or a chain runs from side to side through the uraei and the head of the goddess). The hieroglyphic inscription on the back asks for the protection of the great god Amun. In Nubia today, young girls still wear protective amulets to ward off the evil eye.

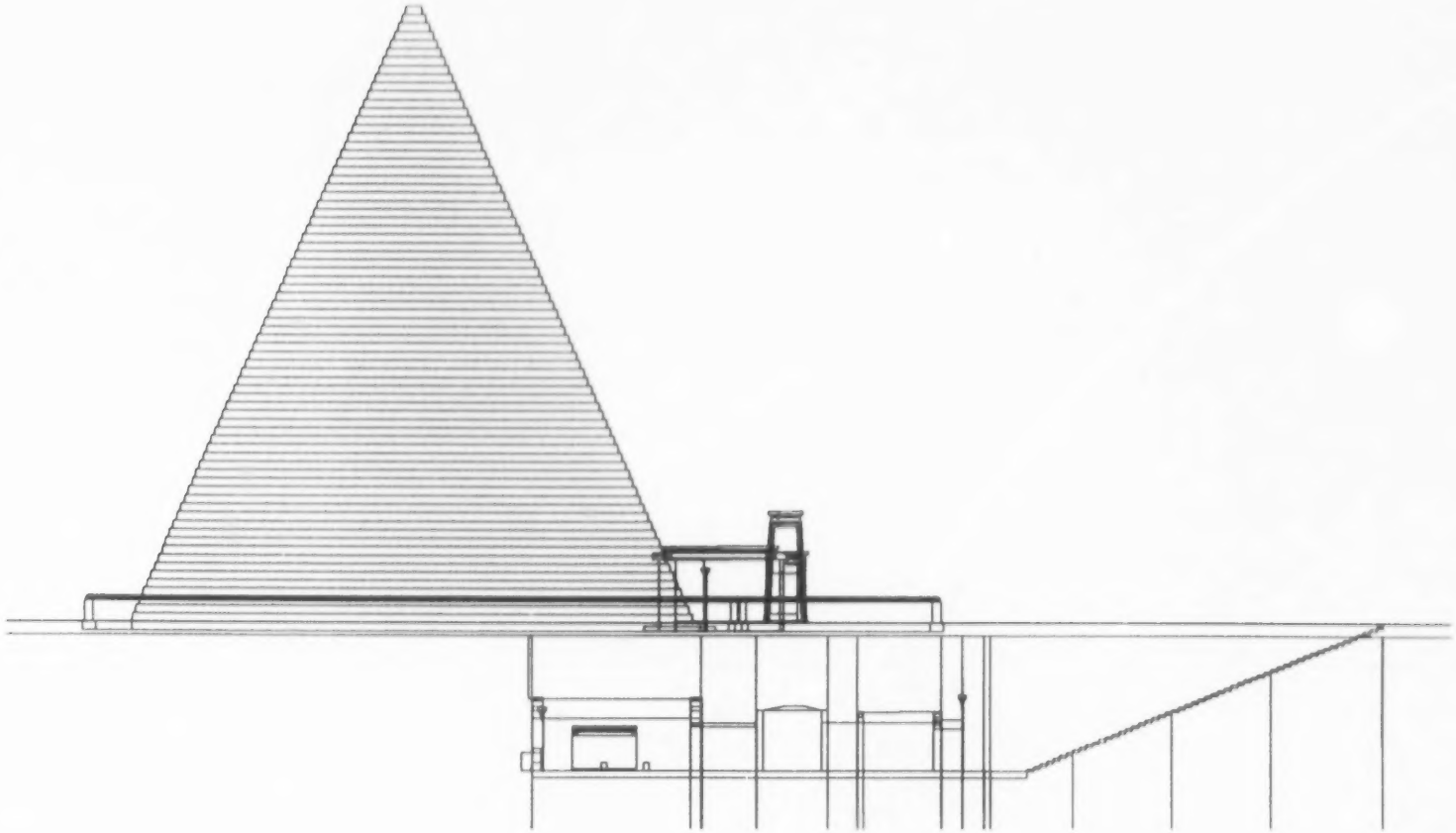
10 Black granite statue of King Aspelta
From Jebel Barkal
600–580 B.C.
Museum Expedition 23.730

Nubians carved and painted few representations of themselves during their early history. But, about 720 B.C., they began to create magnificent stone sculptures of members of the royal Nubian family. King Aspelta, who ruled from about 600 to 580 B.C., appears here in colossal size, with a powerful, striding pose. He is wearing the tall, feathered royal Nubian headdress and the royal skullcap crowned with two rearing cobras (uraei). Aspelta was the fifth successor of Taharka, probably the grandson of Atlanersa, the son of Senkamenisken, and the brother of Anlamani.

This eight-ton, eleven-foot-tall statue is made of black granite and has been given a smooth polish except for the surfaces representing his kilt, headdress, sandals, and jewelry—all of which were left rough to better hold a thin layer of gold leaf. The statue was found with nine other broken statues of Kushite rulers by MFA archaeologists in 1916. The statues represented a series of Kushite kings and one queen, from the earliest, Taharka (690–664 B.C.), who was also pharaoh of Egypt and twice mentioned in the Bible, to the latest, Aspelta. Originally, the statues stood in the Great Temple of Amun, the largest and most important of the six temples at Jebel Barkal, the primary religious center in Nubia.

King Aspelta's coronation text, inscribed on a stela set up at Jebel Barkal, gives a description of how he was chosen by the god Amun. He tells us that many royal children were eligible for the throne, but when the priests asked Amun to decide which one of the children should be king, Amun designated Aspelta.

A full-scale reconstruction of Aspelta's tomb chamber, including a plaster replica of his twelve-ton, granite sarcophagus (owned by the MFA but not currently on view due to lack of suitable gallery space), is on view at the Museum of the National Center for Afro-American Artists, in Roxbury.



11 Computer rendering of the pyramid of King Aspelta
At Nuri, Pyramid Nu.8
Early sixth century B.C.

Computer rendering by William Riseman

Note: This computer rendering was used to create the scale model of Aspelta's pyramid that is on view in the Nubian gallery. The arrangement of the objects nearest the pyramid model was designed to reflect the arrangement of objects buried near or around a pyramid and its burial chamber. At the far right are objects that would be placed outside the pyramid, followed by those within the chapel, then objects found on the stairs leading to the tomb, and finally, the objects from the burial chamber itself.

From the mid-seventh to the late fourth century B.C., twenty kings and fifty-three queens of Kush, were buried in large pyramid tombs near the modern-day village of Nuri. This model presents a restored view of the pyramid of King Aspelta, who ruled from about 600–580 B.C. The royal Nubian pyramids maintained this basic form and layout up until the fourth century A.D. Objects found in this and other royal pyramids are shown nearby, in the case along the wall.

Originally, the pyramid complex would have been completely surrounded by an enclosure. No doubt only those of high priestly or royal rank would have been allowed to enter these enclosures. Magical amulets were buried at the corners of the pyramid complex to ward off evil spirits and to protect the sacred area.

Typical of the Nuri pyramids, Aspelta's was built of solid masonry and measured approximately eighty-six feet square and ninety feet high. A rock-cut stairway leads down to the burial chamber below the pyramid. Amuletic necklaces left by the departing funeral procession were sometimes found resting on the steps. After the burial, the stairway was completely filled in with sand and rubble in an attempt (usually unsuccessful) to hide the tomb entrance from grave robbers.

At the end of the stairway, three interconnecting chambers were cut into the rock. The innermost contained the king's sarcophagus, coffins, body, canopic jars, and shawabti figures. The other rooms were filled with the king's treasure, as well as jars of food and wine to nourish him in the afterlife. The walls were often carved and painted with religious scenes and prayers.

Attached to the pyramid was a small chapel whose walls were decorated with carved-and-painted relief scenes of the king, queen, and gods. The chapel contained a stone stela and offering table, where priests and visitors could make offerings of food and drink and say prayers for the deceased.

12 Ritual objects of Kings Senkamenisken (643–623 B.C.) and Aspelta (600–580 B.C.)

From Nuri, pyramid of Aspelta

Gold pitcher, silver beaker, albastron, spouted vessel, alabastron, ewer with handles, cylinder sheaths, tweezers, vessel lid with braided chain

Silver, gold, alabaster, carnelian, turquoise, and steatite

Museum Expedition 20.334, 20.341–342, 20.1070, 21.339–340, 24.901

King Aspelta's pyramid is one of the most perfectly preserved at Nuri. Part of Aspelta's fame today is due to the rich gold and silver grave goods that were found in his pyramid tomb. The roof of his tomb collapsed in ancient times, concealing and protecting part of the contents of the tomb from thieves. Twenty-two magnificent alabaster perfume and ointment jars lay buried in the rubble of the floor of the entrance chamber, along with fifteen engraved gold cylinders. Many other precious objects made of gold, silver, and alabaster were found in the tomb chamber. The pieces excavated by the MFA in 1917 and illustrated here include:

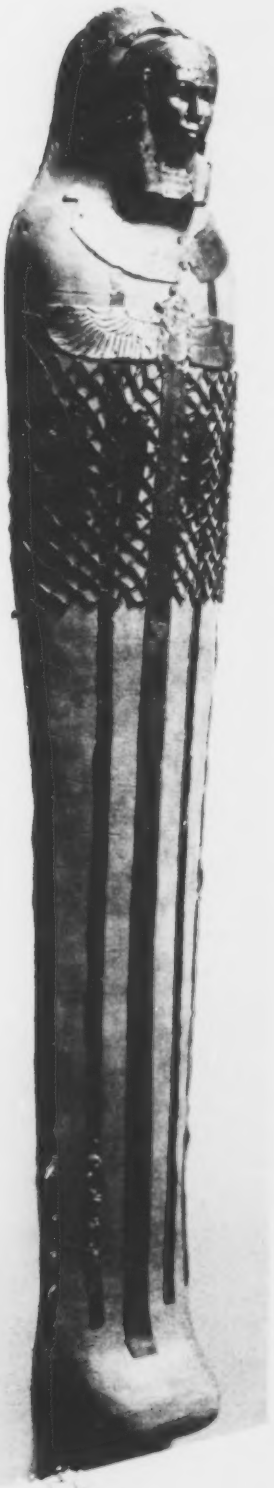
—A magnificent, high-necked gold pitcher with slender body and pointed base. The flat side of the handle is inscribed with a hieroglyphic text that reads, "The Osiris, King Aspelta, justified before Anubis the Great God, Lord of the Necropolis, Anubis, who is on his mountain."

—Gold tweezers of fine workmanship. Three gold tweezers and three silver tweezers were found, all of the same large size.

—A lid with a braided gold chain (the vessel that it covered was never found).

—Two cylinders made of electrum (a naturally occurring blend of silver and gold) featuring a standing figure of the goddess Isis with her wings outstretched below a band of intricate incised designs. Archaeologists have still not been able to figure out what these cylinders were used for.

—A tall, narrow alabaster vase called an alabastron. This one has a flat-topped gold band that fits over the rim of the vessel. The band has glass inlays and tiny carnelian, turquoise, and steatite beads hanging from it on woven gold wire chains. On the shoulders of the vessels are two cartouches, containing Aspelta's given name: "Son of Re, Aspelta" (right); and his religious name: "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Merikare" (left). Goddesses spread their wings protectively around the cartouches.



13 **Queen Mernua's mummy**
From Meroe
Napatan period, early sixth century B.C.
Silver, gilded silver, and faience (most of the bead-net body cover and parts of the silver mummy bands are modern reconstructions)
Harvard University–Museum of Fine Arts Expedition 23.1396

In 1923, the Museum expedition discovered a small queen's tomb at Meroe which had not been plundered. The woman buried there, called the "King's wife Mernua," was probably a minor wife of Aspelta's. It was clear that the body had originally been placed inside three nested, gold-covered, wooden anthropoid (human-shaped) coffins. The wood had completely disintegrated in the hot, damp tomb, but three sets of bronze inlay eyes that fit onto the coffins remained. Her silver and electrum mummy trappings survived, along with many loose beads, which were restrung by the research laboratory to recreate her bead-net body cover.

Nubian kings and queens of that period were mummified according to Egyptian practice, a process that probably took two to three months. After the body was prepared and wrapped with small gold amulets between the linen strips, a gold mask like the one seen here was laid over its face. Gold bands extended from the shoulders to the feet, and other, larger amulets were sewn to the bandages over the chest. The wrapped body was then covered with a network of beads. The bead net can be found on images of Osiris, the king of the dead, and it is placed on the mummy in the hope that the deceased will be reborn and have eternal life, like Osiris.

The mask was too small to have completely covered the face and head. Its main purpose was to provide Lady Mernua a recognizable face of ideal youth and beauty for her eternal spirit.

14 Hinged enamel bracelet of gold with multicolored enameling depicting the goddess Hathor

From Jebel Barkal

About 200 B.C.

Harvard University–Museum Expedition 20.333

This bracelet consists of three hinged segments decorated with enamel inlays and granulation (tiny balls of gold arranged in designs). In the center, a goddess sits in a throne holding a long staff with ankh signs at the top and bottom. She is crowned with the sun disk and horns and a uraeus on her forehead. The geometric designs around her are made of red and green and blue enamel. Enameling techniques were brought to new heights during this time, called the Meroitic period (about 270 B.C.–A.D. 350).

The person in whose tomb this bracelet was found was a female member of the royal family. Although images of her exist on the walls of her tomb, her name is not known.

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15 Granite stela of King Tanyidamani
From Jebel Barkal, Great Temple of Amun
Late second century B.C.
Museum Expedition 23.736

Erected in front of the Great Temple of Amun, this stela is the longest known inscription in the still-undeciphered Meroitic language. Presumably, it records Tanyidamani's military victories and temple endowments; Tanyidamani reigned about 120–100 B.C. Certain lines have been carefully erased, but until we can actually read the text, we can only guess why.

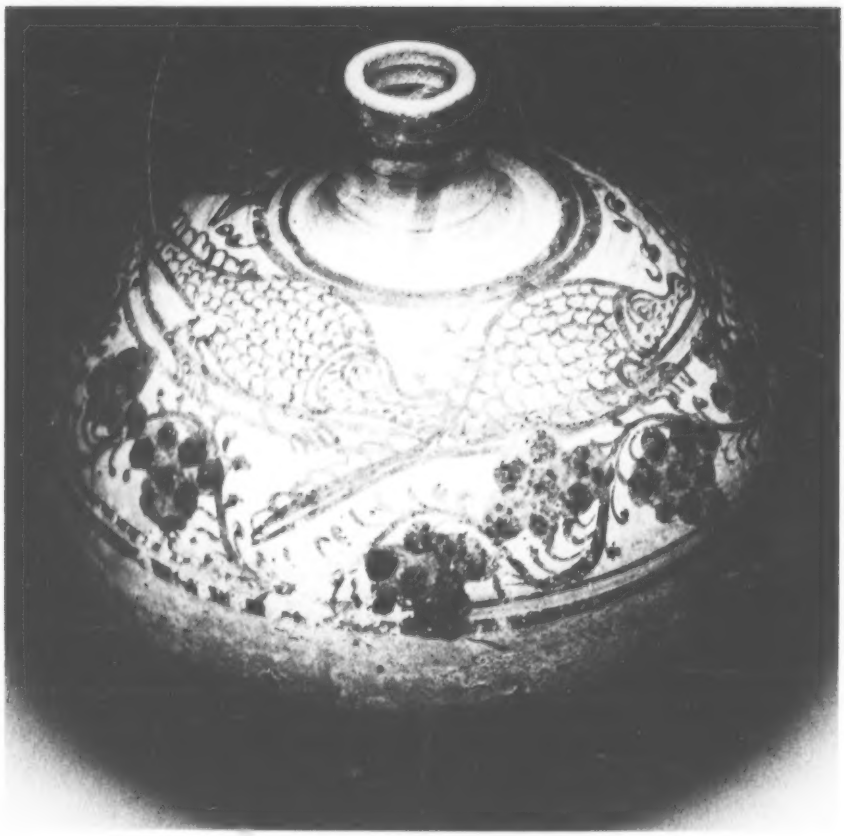
Meroitic writing employed both a formal hieroglyphic and a simple cursive alphabet of twenty-three letter forms. The king's name, in an oval at the top on one side, is written in hieroglyphs. The main text is written in the cursive alphabet. The script is written from right to left, and each word is separated from the next by three vertical dots. While the phonetic values of the letters are known, the meanings of the words are not. (The Meroitic alphabet is reproduced on page 46 of *Nubia, Ancient Kingdoms of Africa.*)

On the side of the stela pictured here, Tanyidamani appears at the top, standing on a bound prisoner, between the human and the ram-headed forms of the god Amun. On the other side, he appears twice, each time standing before the ram-headed god Amun. On the left, he makes offerings to Amun. On the right, he gives Amun victory, presenting him with a conquered enemy. A row of bound prisoners appears below.

16 Sandstone statue of a queen between two goddesses
From Jebel Barkal
Early first century B.C.
Harvard University–Museum Expedition 21.11808

In this sandstone block, an unnamed ruling queen of Meroe is shown between two protective goddesses—Isis and Nepthys. A never-ending offering of water for the queen flows from vases lying on the knees of the goddesses. The queen is represented according to the Kushite feminine ideal, with curly hair, a full figure (a sign of wealth and beauty), and adorned with elaborate jewelry. The goddesses, adopted from Egyptian religion, are represented in Egyptian style, with Egyptian wigs and slimmer bodies.

This statue was originally set in a small chapel attached to the pyramid tomb of the queen. There, offerings of food and water were left before the statue to provide the queen's ka (or spirit) with eternal nourishment. Originally, this sculpture was coated with plaster, into which delicate details were carved. Some flecks of gold and a few traces of red and blue paint are still visible on the now badly worn surface. This suggests that the piece was at one time brightly painted and gilded.



17 Pottery jar with crocodiles, swimming birds, and grapevines

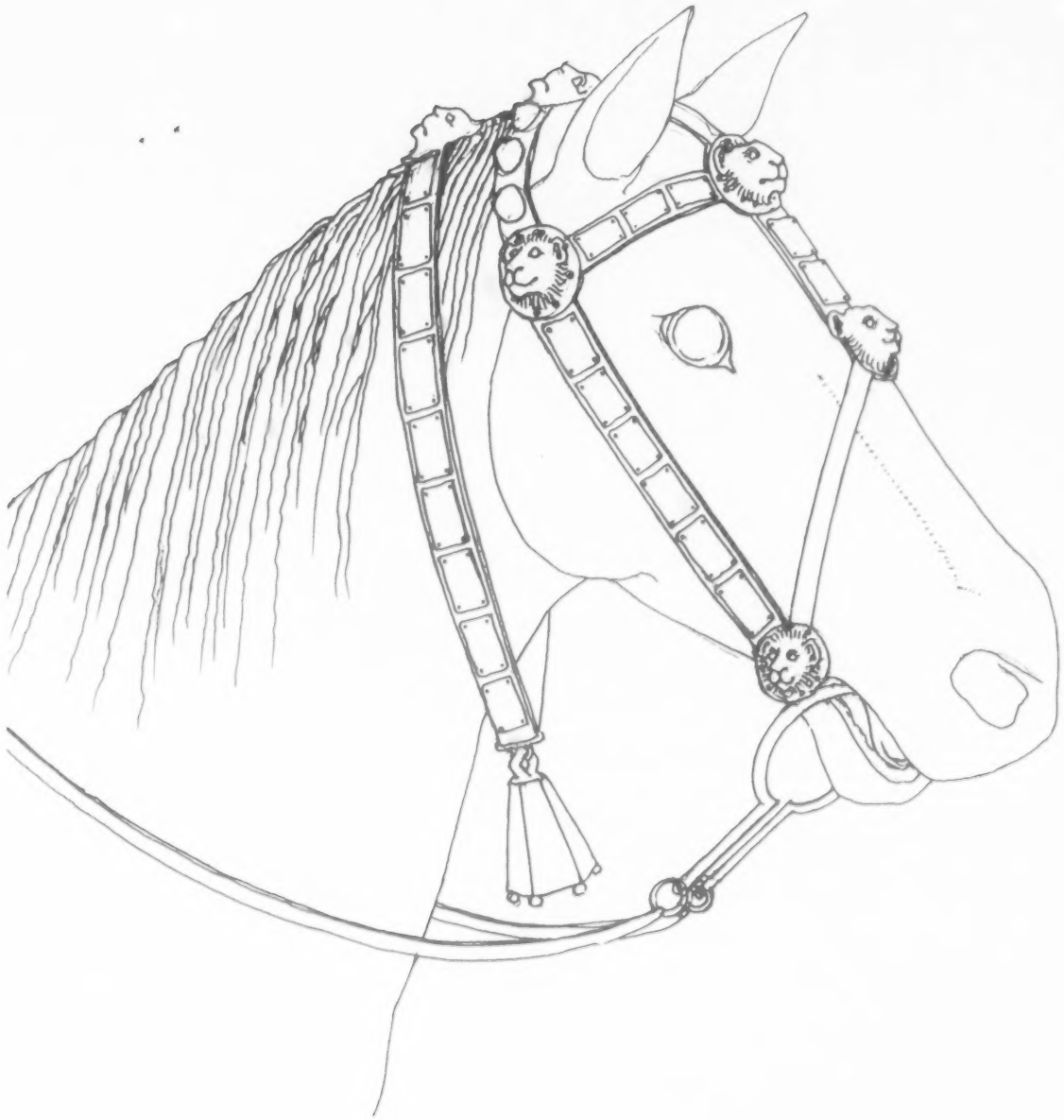
Meroitic, about 270 B.C.–A.D. 350

13.4038

Decorated Meroitic pots like this one have been found in the remains of both villages and graves. Because so much pottery of this kind has been discovered, it was probably used by everyone, not just the wealthy. The individual style of design and type of image on the pots can be used as a way to date the vessels.

Three kinds of decorations appear on Meroitic pottery: abstract and geometric designs such as lines and triangles; repeating patterns of grapevines, lotus flowers, or hieroglyphs; and naturalistic images of animals and birds. This pot combines a repeating grapevine pattern with birds and crocodiles, creatures frequently seen along the Nile River.

In the pottery decorations of the Meroitic period, we see a unique blending of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman motifs, which together form the Meroitic design. The designs no doubt had special meaning to the Meroitic people.



18 Ornaments from the bridle of a royal horse
From Meroe, mid-first century A.D.
Gilt silver, chased and repoussé, overlaying bronze backing plates

24.1057–59, 24.1062–64, 24.1794

Drawing by Timothy Kendall

The horse, although primarily used for military purposes, was a special animal to the kings and queens of Nubia, as revealed in many ways. One inscription of King Piye's, who ruled about 730–716 B.C., describes his anger at the Egyptian prince of Hermopolis because he allowed his horses to starve during Piye's attack of his city. Nubians also demanded the finest horses from their defeated enemy.

At el Kurru (one of the four major royal cemeteries of Kush), the chariot horses of the kings were sacrificed after their death and buried in a special cemetery close to the royal pyramids. These horses were buried standing up in groups of four. They were not wearing bridles or bits, but they were decorated with elaborate faience bead nets draped over their backs with faience-and-silver amulets attached to them, along with large strings of heavy, silver balls. Some horses had silver collars, some of which must have been decorated with fancy feather plumes because in one grave a gold-covered silver plume holder was found.

In the Meroitic period, horses were occasionally buried in the stairway of the rulers' pyramid tomb entrances with their grooms, who had been killed, beside them. Some Meroitic rulers actually had the silver bridle ornaments of their horses buried in their tombs. These silver plaques and bosses were decorated with images of the Meroitic gods; one on view at the MFA carries a bow and quiver and brandishes a mace. The lions' head and figures of running lions that decorate the plaques and bosses symbolized Apedemak, the lion-headed war god of Meroe. Bronze bells were often hung from the bridles.

More Resources

Further Reading

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MFA Resources

Guided Visits for School Groups The MFA offers guided visits throughout the school year. Visits focusing on ancient Nubian and/or Egyptian art and culture can be tailored to meet the needs and interests of individual teachers and students. Call (617) 369-3310 for more information.

Artful Adventures Artful Adventures introduces children and teens in community groups and special needs classrooms to the MFA. Visits can be planned around a variety of themes, including ancient Nubia or ancient Egypt. Call (617) 369-3303 for more information.

The Nubian Experience A twenty-minute video (produced by the Kush Club, in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Department of Education) written, narrated, and presented by teen members of the Kush Club. Available through the MFA Department of Education. Cost: $19.95 (includes shipping and handling).

Other Resources

Visiting Aspelta's Nubia Guided tour of King Aspelta's tomb replica. Related arts project optional. Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, 300 Walnut Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02119. (617) 442-8614 or 442-8014.
Cost: $75

Great Civilizations in African History Four filmstrips accompanied by audiocassettes and skill sheets, geared for grades 4–8. Available through the Society for Visual Education, Inc., 6677 North Northwest Highway, Chicago, Illinois 60631; item #20363-SATC. Call (312) 775-9550 for more information.
Cost: $149